

Safe, Healthy Foods and Drinks

Drinks

Water

Water is the best drink for your child, but it shouldn't replace human milk or infant formula for the first 12 months.

Starting at 6 months, give your child small amounts of water in an open cup. Offer it between meals and breastfeedings or chestfeedings so they learn to enjoy water while still getting the human milk or formula they need.

- ✓ If your home was built before 1989, you may have lead pipes. Flush them each morning by running your water for 1 to 5 minutes or until it turns cold.
- ✓ If you have your own private water supply, have your water tested according to provincial guidelines. Learn more at healthlinkbc.ca.
- ✓ Always follow "boil water" advisories in your area.



HOW TO Check drinking-water advisories online

- For provincial advisories, visit gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-quality/drinking-water-quality/notices-boil-water-advisories.
- For First Nations Health Authority advisories, visit fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health/drinking-water-advisories.

Milk

Between 9 and 12 months, you can start offering your baby pasteurized whole (3.25%) cow's milk or fortified goat's milk, as long as they also eat a variety of iron-rich foods like meat, fish, poultry, eggs, tofu, iron-fortified cereals, beans, peas and lentils. Offer them 2 cups (500 ml) of milk every day if they no longer breastfeed or chestfeed.

At 24 months, you might choose to switch to lower-fat cow's milk (1% or 2%). If your child is over 24 months and doesn't drink cow's milk or fortified goat's milk, offer them unsweetened soy beverage fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

- ✓ Limit milk to no more than 3 cups (750 ml) per day, so your toddler has room for other healthy foods.
- ✗ Avoid letting your toddler sip milk between meals or snacks, which can lead to tooth decay.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your toddler can continue to breastfeed or chestfeed or drink expressed human milk until they're 24 months or older.



TRY THIS

With meals, offer milk. Between meals, offer water. And continue to breastfeed or chestfeed for as long as you choose.

Fruit Juice

Sugary drinks like 100% fruit juice are not recommended for infants or toddlers. Avoid offering juice to your toddler but if you do:

- ✓ limit to ½ cup (125 ml) a day
- ✓ serve only at meal or snack time and in an open cup
- ✗ avoid serving fruit juice in a bottle which can cause tooth decay

Drinks to avoid

- ✗ **Sugary drinks** like fruit juice, fruit and fruit-flavoured drinks made from powders or crystals, pop, sports drinks, and slush drinks. These have too much sugar and not enough of the nutrients toddlers need.
- ✗ **Drinks with caffeine** like soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, coffee, coffee-slush drinks, tea and hot chocolate. These can make your toddler excited and anxious and make sleep more difficult.
- ✗ **Unpasteurized drinks**, including unpasteurized cow's milk, goat's milk, fruit juice and cider may contain dangerous bacteria.
- ✗ **Toddler nutritional supplement drinks** aren't needed.
- ✗ **Drinks containing sugar substitutes** (artificial sweeteners) offer no nutritional value.

If you're concerned about your child's food intake or growth, talk with your health care provider.



DID YOU KNOW?

Other than those made with soy, plant-based drinks – like rice, almond, cashew and oat milks – don't have enough energy or protein for your growing toddler. Don't let these drinks replace human milk, cow's milk or formula, and don't offer them until your child is at least 2 and getting plenty of nutrition from their diet.

Foods

Vegetables and fruit

All vegetables and fruit – fresh, frozen, canned and dried – are healthy choices when they're prepared and stored safely.

Meat, fish, poultry, seafood and eggs

Reduce the risk of food poisoning by fully cooking all pork to an inside temperature of 71°C; ground beef, lamb and veal to 71°C; and game meats to 74°C. Well-done pieces and whole cuts of beef, lamb and veal should be cooked to 77°C. Eggs should be cooked until the yolks are hard (74°C). For poultry and game birds, cook to 74°C for parts and ground meat, and 82°C for whole birds. Fish should be cooked to 70°C (fully cooked fish should flake with a fork). Oysters should be cooked to 90°C, but other shellfish can be cooked to 71°C. Use a food thermometer to check the inside temperature of meat.

Liver

Liver offers iron and other key nutrients, but eating too much can provide too much vitamin A. Give only small amounts to your toddler.

Oysters

B.C. oysters are high in cadmium, so only give them to your toddler in limited amounts. Oysters should be full cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 90°C for a minimum of 90 seconds.

Fish

Fish provides many nutrients including protein and omega-3 fats, which are important for brain and eye development. Offer it to your child regularly. Some fish, though, is high in mercury, and should be limited.

High-mercury fish – serve in limited amounts only:

| | Children 6-12 months | Children 12-36 months |
|---|---|---|
| Fresh and frozen tuna, shark, marlin, swordfish, escolar, orange roughy | No more than 40 grams (1¼ oz) per month | No more than 75 grams (2½ oz) per month |
| Canned albacore tuna | No more than 40 grams (1¼ oz) per week | No more than 75 grams (2½ oz) per week |

Fish not high in mercury – serve regularly:

- all other fish sold in Canada
- canned light tuna including skipjack, yellowfin and tongol



BE AWARE

Fish high in mercury can damage your toddler's growing brain.

Foods to avoid

- ✗ **Honey** can give your baby botulism, a food-borne illness. Never give honey or foods containing honey to a child less than 1 year old.
- ✗ **Sprouts** (like alfalfa and mung bean) can contain harmful bacteria. Only give them to your toddler if they're thoroughly cooked.
- ✗ **Unpasteurized cheese and yogurt** made from raw milk may contain harmful bacteria that can cause toddlers to become very sick or even die. Check the label, and choose only those made from pasteurized milk.
- ✗ **Foods that can cause choking.** (See [Reducing Choking Hazards](#))
- ✗ **Foods containing artificial sweeteners.**

Highly processed foods

Highly processed foods – store-bought and from restaurants – are high in salt, sugar and saturated fats. Offer them less often and in smaller amounts. Try:

- stocking your kitchen with healthy snacks, like fruit, carrots and hard-boiled eggs
- planning your meals and snacks in advance
- offering water instead of sugary drinks
- limiting processed meats like ham, bacon, sausage, hot dogs and luncheon meats
- reducing store-bought cookies, cakes, candy, chocolate, chips and salty snacks
- offering fewer frozen packaged foods like pizza and pasta
- choosing healthier menu options when eating out
- making homemade versions of favourite restaurant foods like fries, chicken strips and pizza