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Beverages of choice: Milk v/s Cane-soft-sweetened and unsweetened-drink in school-aged-children

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Abstract

Consumption of beverages with extra calories but little nutritional value can displace healthy food and beverages children need to optimize learning. Many drink bottles, a popular school lunch choice, are sugary fruit-flavoured drinks that tend to have less than 10 percent juice. Some have added vitamin-C, but lack of other nutrients offered by real fruit juices. Soft drinks are also a part of the daily diet for many school age children. Approximately one-third of students in grades-IV-VIII consume soft drinks daily. On the other hand, unfortunately, many school-aged-children are not consuming enough milk products to support their health. Since roughly one third of a child's food intake for the day occurs at school, the school environment is a perfect place to encourage milk consumption.

Keywords: Beverages, calories, nutritional, food, fruit-flavoured drinks, nutrients, real fruit juices, school age children, soft drinks.

Introduction

Roughly one third of a child's food intake for the day occurs at school; thus the school environment is a perfect place to encourage healthy choices such as milk. Such information always can see on the notice board of a school...refer to the chart on the front page and notice the nutrients milk provides compared with fruit-flavoured drinks, sports drinks or soft drinks. As we can see, nutrient rich milk provides children with benefits beyond refreshment.

Research hypothesis

In this article it is studied that many school aged children are not consuming milk to support their health and are using cane-soft-drink for the health purposes.

Analysis & Interpretation

The link between good nutrition and school performance is well established. Studies show that well-nourished children are able to perform better in school; their ability to concentrate and perform complex tasks improves, as well as their overall ability to learn. Children who are hungry or poorly nourished are more irritable, lethargic, easily distracted and at risk for poor academic performances. Undernourished children not only have less learning ability, but also are more likely to be prone to infection and miss more school. Beyond impact on learning, unhealthy eating during childhood may interfere with growth and development and increase the risk of chronic disease later in life such as heart disease and osteoporosis [1].

Since over 80% of school-aged-children are eating lunch at school and it is vitally important that the foods they eat promote their overall well-being as well as their ability to learn. Research supports that healthy school environments include both education about healthy eating and the provision of healthy foods. Unfortunately, nutrient-poor food choices as fruit drinks, sports drinks, soft drinks, sugary snacks are displacing foods of higher nutritional value like milk, vegetables and fruits in school lunch bags. This is particularly alarming as it may contribute to weight problems and obesity in Children. Children who are eating less healthful choices at school do not compensate for this by choosing more healthful choices away from school [2].

Milk provides 16 essential nutrients that help nourish healthy bodies and minds. No other beverage naturally comes close. Children who drink milk tend to have higher intakes of specifi

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nutrients, such as vitamin A, foliate, vitamin B12, calcium and magnesium, and have better overall nutritional status than non-milk drinkers. Milk is the primary dietary source of Vitamin D and most reliable source of dietary calcium; both nutrients and increasingly recognized as being beneficial to overall health. To build strong bones during childhood, and help prevent osteoporosis later in life, it's critical that children get enough calcium and vitamin D by consuming the recommended food guide servings of Milk and Alternatives every day.

Unfortunately, many children are not consuming enough milk products to support their health. Since roughly one third of a child's food intake for the day occurs at school, the school environment is a perfect place to encourage milk consumption.

Protein helps build strong muscles and build antibodies to boost the immune system so kids can feel their best^[3].

Vitamin D: milk is an excellent source of vitamin D that is essential for overall health, helps boost immunity, and is crucial for the body to absorb and use calcium to build strong bones.

Calcium: critical for healthy bones and teeth, but also involved in muscle functioning, for example, calcium contributes to a healthy heart beat.

Vitamin B12: found naturally only in animal products, vitamin B12 in milk is easily absorbed by the body and is important for healthy neurological functioning.

Zinc: especially important for kids, zinc is essential for optimal growth and development as well as cognitive function.

Young minds need good food to perform at their best; healthy choices at lunch give them the energy they need to get through the school day.

Sugary beverages

Most children have a sweet tooth and are prone to asking for sugary beverages. However, guiding them towards more balanced options is important for their health.

Unlike many other drinks, water won't provide liquid calories, making it less likely that your child will feel full and refuse solid food. This can be especially important if you have a picky eater. Drinking enough water is linked to healthy body weight, reduced risk of dental cavities and improved brain function in school-aged-children. Additionally, dehydration can negatively impact on child's health in many ways, potentially reducing brain function, causing constipation and leading to fatigue. So water is essential to your child's health and should make up the majority of their fluid intake.

Normal water seems to be boring for school-aged-children. To make water more interesting without adding extra sugar and calories, try infusing water with fresh fruits and herbs so that the child will get a boost of nutrition from the fresh fruit and herbs used in the water. So to make water enticing for children fresh fruit and herbs to provide colours and flavours. Although coconut water does contain calories and sugar, it makes a healthier choice than other beverages like soda and sports drink. It provides a good amount of several nutrients including vitamin C, magnesium and potassium all of which are important for children. Coconut water also contains electrolytes- such as potassium, magnesium, calcium and sodium- which are lost through sweat during exercise. This

makes coconut water an excellent hydration alternative to sugary sports drinks for active children. Coconut water is also beneficial when the child is sick, especially if they need to rehydrate after a bout of diarrhoea or vomiting. However, it is important to carefully read the label when purchasing coconut water, as some brands contain added sugar and artificial flavour. Plain, unsweetened coconut water is always the best choice for children. So coconut water is rich in nutrients and electrolytes, making it an excellent rehydrate after sickness or physical activity.

Smoothies can be especially helpful for parents dealing with picky eaters. Many vegetables-such as kale, spinach and even cauliflower can be blended into a sweet-tasting smoothie that the child will love. Some kid-friendly smoothie combinations include:⁴

- Kale and pineapple
- Spinach and blueberries
- Peach and cauliflower
- Strawberries and beets

So, blend the ingredient with unsweetened non-dairy-based milk and use healthy add-ins like hemp seeds, cocoa powder, unsweetened coconut, avocados or ground flax seeds, therefore to avoid purchasing smoothies at grocery stores or restaurant as these may contain added sugars and opt for homemade versions whenever possible. Since smoothies are high in calories, offer them as a snack or alongside a small meal. Homemade smoothies are an excellent way to increase your child's consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Unsweetened milk

Even though many children prefer sweetened milk drinks like chocolate or strawberry milk, plain, unsweetened milk makes the healthiest choice for kids. Plain milk is highly nutritious providing many nutrients that are critical for growth and development. For example, milk contains protein, calcium, phosphorus and magnesium essential nutrients for bone health that are especially important for growing children.

Additionally, milk is often fortified with vitamin D another important vitamin for bone health. While many parents tends to give children fat-free milk, milk with a higher fat content may be healthier for younger children, as fat is needed for proper brain development and overall growth. In fact, children have a higher need for fat than adults, due to an increased rate of metabolism. For these reasons, higher-fat-milk choices, such as 2% fat milk, makes a better choice than skim milk for most children.

However, it is important to note that drinking too much milk can cause children to become full, potentially causing them to consume less of their meal or snack. It must be ensured that the child doesn't become overly full on milk before eating food, only offer a small portion of milk at mealtime. While milk can be a nutritious drink choice, many children are intolerant to dairy milk.. Signs of milk intolerance include bloating, diarrhoea, gas, skin rashes and abdominal cramps. So unsweetened dairy milk provides a number of nutrients that growing children need. However, some children may be intolerant to milk.

Unsweetened plant-based milk

For children who are intolerant to dairy milk, unsweetened plant-based milks are an excellent alternatives. Plant based milks include hemp, coconut, almond, cashew, rice and soy milk. Like sweetened dairy milk, sweetened plant-based milks can contain loads of added sugar and artificial sweeteners,

which is why it's best to choose unsweetened versions. Unsweetened plant-based milks can be used on their own as a low calorie beverage or as a base for kid-friendly smoothies, oat meals and soups. Providing low-calorie beverages with meals decreases the likelihood of your child filling up on liquids alone and many plant based milks provide a variety of vitamins and minerals and are often fortified with nutrients like calcium, B12 AND vitamin D. Unsweetened plant based milk-such as coconut, hemp and make excellent substitutions for dairy milk.

Although it's perfectly acceptable for school-aged-children to occasionally enjoy a sweetened drink, sugary beverages should not be consumed regularly. Frequent consumption of sweetened beverages- such as soda and sports drinks-may lead to health conditions like obesity and dental cavities in children.

Soda and sweetened beverages

If any drink should be limited in a child's diet it's soda- as well as other sweetened beverages, such as sports drinks, sweetened milks and sweet teas. A 12-ounce (354-ml) serving of regular Coca-cola contains 39 grams of sugar- or almost 10 teaspoons ^[4].

The American Heart Association(AHA)⁵ recommends that added sugar intake be kept under 6 teaspoons (25gm) per day for school-aged-children-aged- 2 to 18 years old. Such type of sweetened beverages are linked to an increased risk of illness such as type-2 diabetes and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in children and drinking too many sweetened beverages can contribute to weight gain and cavities in kids. And many, ore sweetened drinks, such as flavoured milks contain high fructose corn syrup, a processed sweetener linked to weight gain in children. So sweetened beverages are high in added sugar and may increase the child's risk of certain above mentioned diseases.

Juice

Even though 100% fruit juice provides important vitamins and minerals, intake should be limited to the recommended amounts for children. Professional association such as the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAA) ^[6]. recommend that juice be limited to 4-6 ounce (120-180 ml) per day for children aged 1-6 and 8-12 ounce (236-255ml) per day for children aged 7-18. When consumed in these amount, 100% fruit juice is not usually associated with weight gain. However excessive fruit juice consumption is associated with an increased risk of obesity in children and studies shows that daily fruit juice consumption to weight gain in younger children. A review of 8 studies found that a daily serving of 100% fruit juice was associated with increased weight gain over 1 year in children aged 1-6. It is because fruit juice lacks the filling fibre found in whole, fresh fruit, its easy for children to drink too much juice and for this the children's should be offered whole fruit over fruit juice whenever possible. The AAP recommends that juice be completely restricted in infants under one year of age.

Caffeinated beverages

Many school-aged children drink caffeinated beverages such as soda, coffee and energy drinks which may have adverse effects on health. One study reported about 75% of US children aged 6-19 consume caffeine with an average intake of 25 mg per day in children 2-11 years old and double that amount in children aged 12-17. Caffeine can cause jitteriness, rapid heart rate, high blood pressure, anxiety and sleep

disturbances in kids which is why beverages containing caffeine should be restricted based on age. Children's health organizations like AAP suggests that caffeine should be limited to no more than 85-100 mg per day for children older than 12 and should be completely avoided in children under 12. So parents should keep in mind that certain energy drinks can contain over 100 mg of caffeine per 12-ounce (354-ml) serving, making it necessary to restrict energy drinks for all children and adolescents to avoid excessive caffeination.

Conclusion

So we can offer a wide array of healthy drinks to school-aged-children when they are thirsty. Infused and plain water, dairy and plant based milk and certain herbal drinks are example of kid-friendly-beverages. Whenever neede use these drinks in place of sugary, high calorie options such as soda, sweetened milks and sports drinks. Although children may protest swapping their favourite sweetened beverages for a healthier option but we should rest assure that we have to do the right thing for the child's health.

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