



CHILD CARE OPTIONS
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**Child Care Options Resource
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ARTICLES & ACTIVITIES

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Nutrition Notes

“My child won’t eat anything” is a common lament I hear from parents. Sometimes through our conversation it becomes clear that no, this child isn’t eating very many solid foods, but is quite happy to sip on juice all day. Is this a problem? After all, 100% fruit juice is a good source of fluid and vitamin C, and kids just love the sweet taste! But sometimes parents are giving their children too much of a good thing.

Juice fills us up just like solid food. Young children, with their small stomachs, can easily fill up on fluids, and have no room and little appetite left for other foods. Why is this a problem? Juice does not contain the variety of nutrients that children need for growth and development. Nutritionist types call this “juice displacing other foods”. In addition, sipping on juice all day from a cup, or at bedtime from a bottle, can contribute to the rapid onset of tooth decay. Once the juice habit is formed, it is a challenge to break. Kids do love juice. If you have young children and you haven’t introduced it already, my suggestion is don’t introduce it at all or offer it in a small amount (no more than ½ cup) at the same time of the day. Your child will come to expect that this is the time of day when she/he has juice. Offer water throughout the rest of the day for thirst. If the habit is already formed it’s time to consider breaking it. You can go “cold turkey” and switch to offering water for thirst. If this seems daunting, you may want to gradually dilute the juice with water, say over a week or two, eventually eliminating the juice completely, with the exception of a small amount once a day as mentioned earlier.

Don’t be fooled into thinking that sipping on diluted juice is ok over the long term. It still has sugar in it, which again can contribute to tooth decay.

Here is what the Committee on Nutrition of the American Pediatrics Association has to say about the appropriate use of 100% fruit juice among infants and children up to age 18:

All children (and I recommend this for adults too) should be encouraged to eat whole fruits to meet their recommended daily fruit intake. Fruit juice should not be given to infants before six months of age.

Infants, children, and adolescents should not drink unpasteurized juice. Unpasteurized juice may contain pathogens that can cause serious illnesses.

Infants should not be given juice from bottles or easily transportable covered cups (“sippy” cups) that allow them to drink juice easily throughout the day. I suggest you offer juice as part of a meal or snack, when your child is sitting at the table to eat. Infants should not get fruit juice at bedtime.

For children 1 to 6 years old, juice intake should be limited to 125 ml (1/2 cup) per day. For children 7 to 18 years old, juice intake should be limited to 250 ml (1 cup) per day.

100% fruit juice can be part of a healthy diet for all of us, if we drink it in small amounts.

The key word is “moderation,” because as we all know, you can get too much of a good thing.

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