

Healthy Drinks, Healthy Kids: 2–18 Years

Drinks help children and youth to get the fluids they need to keep their bodies working well.

How much do 2–18 year olds need to drink?

Different amounts of fluid are needed depending on age and gender. See the table below.

Age in years	Recommended amount of fluid to drink daily	
	Girls	Boys
2–3	4 cups (900 mL)	
4–8	5 cups (1200 mL)	
9–13	6 cups (1600 mL)	7 cups (1800 mL)
14–18	7 cups (1800 mL)	10 cups (2600 mL)

Sometimes a child may need to drink more fluid. For example: in hot weather, when they're active, or not feeling well. Talk to your healthcare provider for more information.

Water

Make water the drink of choice. Offer it throughout the day. Unsweetened milk or fortified soy beverages are also healthy drinks.

Water

Offer water during the day and with meals to meet fluid needs and to quench thirst.

- Plain water without anything added is best.
- Reusable water bottles can be refilled all day long.



What about other waters?

- If you are offering flavoured or carbonated (bubbly) water, choose those without added sugar, sugar substitutes or sodium. For older kids, try flavouring water with natural ingredients like, mint, cucumber or fruit.
- **Coconut water** contains minerals like sodium and potassium. If choosing coconut water, choose plain coconut water without added sugar.
- **Vitamin waters** aren't needed for healthy eating. They may contain added vitamins, minerals, caffeine, herbs, sugars or sugar substitutes.

Milk or fortified soy beverages

A practical way to help children meet their needs for nutrients such as protein, calcium and vitamin D is to offer 2 cups (500 mL) of milk (skim, 1%, 2%) or fortified soy beverage every day. Canada's Food Guide includes these drinks as protein foods.



If choosing soy beverage, read the Nutrition Facts table and the ingredient list and choose one that:

- has calcium and vitamin D added
- is unsweetened

Other plant-based beverages

Beverages made from plants such as rice, almond, coconut, oat, potato, and hemp may not be fortified or enriched with calcium and vitamin D.

Plant-based beverages other than soy beverage are not considered a protein food because they may be lower in protein than milk.

If offering a plant-based beverage, read the Nutrition Facts table and ingredients list on the label and choose one that:

- has calcium and vitamin D added
- is unsweetened

If your child is replacing milk or soy beverages with other plant-based beverages, talk to a dietitian.

Drinks to limit

Limit drinks that have higher amounts of sugar, caffeine, or sugar substitutes.

Flavoured milks, yogurt drinks, kefir or fortified soy beverages

These drinks have the same nutrients as the unflavoured versions, but contain added sugar.

100% juice

Juice is a sugary drink and isn't needed. Vegetable juices or blends may also be high in sodium.

Fruit drinks, iced tea, pop, or slushes

These drinks may be high in sugars or contain sugar substitutes. Iced tea, pop, and slushes may contain caffeine.

Sports drinks

Sports drinks are not needed for most activities.

Water is the best choice before, during, and after regular activity. For more information go to healthyeatingstartshere.ca and search for: "Sports Nutrition".

Energy drinks

Energy drinks are **not recommended** for children and youth because of their high levels of caffeine, sugar, and other added ingredients, such as vitamins and herbs.

For more information visit healthyeatingstartshere.ca and search for: "The Energy Drink Buzz".

Coffee and tea drinks

Many hot and cold coffee or tea drinks are made with flavoured milk, cream or whipped topping, and syrups, making them higher in fat and sugar. They may also contain caffeine or sugar substitutes.

Ingredient information

Sugar

A child who drinks fewer sugar sweetened drinks has a lower risk of tooth decay, overweight and type 2 diabetes.

Some names for sugar on the drinks' ingredient list are:

- agave syrup
- cane sugar/juice
- corn syrup/solids
- dextrose
- fructose
- fruit juice, purées and concentrates
- glucose
- honey
- liquid sugar
- maltose
- molasses
- sucrose
- syrup

Caffeine

Caffeine is found in coffee-based drinks, energy drinks, tea, iced tea, pop, and other drinks. Some side effects of caffeine are: nervousness, faster heart rate, and problems sleeping. Choose drinks without caffeine. Visit dietitians.ca and search for "Caffeine and Health" for more information.

Sugar substitutes

Drinks sweetened with sugar substitutes often have few nutrients and may take the place of healthy food and drinks. Sugar substitutes are not needed, unless a healthcare provider suggests them.

Some names of sugar substitutes on the drinks' ingredient list are:

- acesulfame potassium
- aspartame
- polydextrose
- sorbitol
- stevia
- sucralose
- xylitol

Read the product label

Use the ingredient list and Nutrition Facts table to compare drinks.

Ingredient list

Check the ingredient list to see if there is added sugar, caffeine, or sugar substitutes. Ingredients are listed in order of what was used the most to what was used the least to make the product. New labels will group all the sugars together.

Ingredients: Carbonated water, **Sugars (glucose-fructose, sugar)**, sodium citrate, caffeine

Nutrition Facts table

Read the Nutrition Facts table to find the serving size and the grams of sugar in the serving. Grams of sugar include naturally-occurring and/or added sugars.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 1 cup (250 mL)	
Calories 140	% Daily Value*
Fat 0 g	0 %
Saturated 0 g	0 %
+Trans 0 g	0 %
Carbohydrate 26 g	
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 22 g	22 %
Protein 2 g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Potassium 450 mg	10 %
Calcium 30 mg	2 %
Iron 0 mg	0 %
*5% or less is a little , 15% or more is a lot	

Compare products and choose the one with less sugar. The drink above has 22 grams or about 5½ tsp of sugar in 1 cup (250 mL).

Did you know?

4 grams of sugar is about 1 tsp of sugar.

Drink	Tsp or grams of sugar
 Fruit juice or drink	591 mL bottle = 18 tsp or 72 grams
 Vitamin water	591 mL bottle = 8 tsp or 32 grams
 Sports drink	710 mL bottle = 10 tsp or 40 grams
 Energy drink	473 mL can = 14 tsp or 56 grams
 Iced coffee drink	414 mL = 12 tsp or 48 grams (natural and added sugar)