

Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

With kids, emphasize whole fruit over juice

My grandchildren will be spending a few days with us during the holidays. My daughter, their mother, mentioned the other day that she hoped I wouldn't overload them on soft drinks and juice while they're here. I can understand soft drinks, but what's wrong with fruit juice?

Times have changed. Back in the day, pediatricians and nutrition professionals encouraged parents to serve children 100 percent fruit juice as a healthy source of vitamin C and other nutrients. It wasn't unusual to see a toddler toddling around with a sippy cup of juice from morning till night.

But there are downsides to drinking so much fruit juice, too. That's why, for more than a decade, authorities have recommended that juice consumption be limited to just 4-6 ounces a day for children 1 to 6 years old, and 8-12 ounces for older children. For people of all ages, fruit juice should be limited to half of your daily fruit consumption.

What could be wrong with fruit juice? The American Academy of Pediatrics, among other health authorities, offers these insights:

- Too much juice can lead to the consumption of too many calories. Six ounces of orange juice, for example, contains about the same number of calories as a large orange, but the juice isn't nearly as filling as the whole fruit. That could lead to eating other, less nutrient-dense foods with even more calories.
- Drinking juice instead of milk could mean a reduced intake of protein, fat, vitamins and minerals such as iron, calcium and zinc — nutrients children need for healthy growth.
- Excessive amounts of juice can cause diarrhea.



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- Prolonged exposure to juice has been associated with the development of cavities.

With all that in mind, the pediatricians' association provided guidance on fruit juice consumption in 2001. The recommendations include:

- Fruit juice should not be introduced into the diet of infants before 6 months of age. It offers no nutritional benefits over breast milk or infant formula.
- Infants should not be given juice from bottles or easily transportable covered cups that allow them to consume juice easily throughout the day. Infants should not be given juice at bedtime.
- Children should be encouraged to eat whole fruits to meet their recommended daily fruit intake.
- Infants, children, and adolescents should not consume unpasteurized juice, which may contain pathogens that could cause serious illness.
- Fruit juice should be provided as part of a meal or snack, not served on its own.

It's worth noting that these recommendations are related to 100 percent fruit juice, whether or not it's reconstituted from concentrate. Similar beverages, often labeled as "fruit drink" or "fruit cocktail," often contain added sugars and provide as little as 10 percent real juice. Look at the labels.

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