

# Popular plant-based milk is not recommended for children under 5



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In September, 2019, a major consensus of four leading health groups – The American Academy of Pediatrics; The American Heart Association; The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry; The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics – recommended that all children 5 years and under should avoid drinking plant based non-dairy milk, flavored milk, toddler formula, caffeinated beverages and sugar and low calorie sweetened beverages because they provide no unique nutritional value. Nutrients, including sugars, are added to look equivalent to cow's milk but their bio availability is not known compared to the naturally occurring nutrients in cow's milk.

Cow's milk and plain fluorinated water should be the main beverages of children ages 1-5 years of age.

Children ages birth to 1 year should only be drinking breast milk or formula, at 1-2 years whole homogenized cow's milk and over 2 years skim or 1 percent cow's milk.

We are bombarded with commercials for all kinds of milk. Dairy cases in stores are filled with a myriad of bright colored cartons of plant-based milks including almond, coconut, soy and oat as well as other drinks with advertising implying that they are healthy. Recently a 5 year old was asked if she drank cow's milk. She appeared puzzled, looked at her mom and asked "What kind of milk do I drink?"

Plain fluorinated water is found in



**Cow's milk is the No. 1 source of energy, calcium, vitamin A, vitamin D and zinc for infants and children.** GETTY IMAGES

municipal water supplies, such as Fort Myers city water, Lee County water, Cape Coral city water, etc. Bottled water does not contain fluoride, with few exceptions (Nursery water). Municipal water out of the refrigerator maintains adequate fluoride content through the internal filter. Fluoride in water is the most efficient way to prevent one of the most common childhood diseases – tooth decay. Infants 6-12 months of age are now allowed 4-8 ounces of plain fluorinated water in a drinking cup during meal times.

The expert group allows up to 4 ounces of 100 percent fruit juice or vegetable juice provided there is no added sugar or artificial ingredients. However, some dentists compare fruit juice to soda because of the sugar

content.

Cow's milk is the No. 1 source of energy, calcium, vitamin A, vitamin D and zinc for infants and children, thus making it a clear component for a healthy diet. It is important to note that plant-based milk is not nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk. Their nutritional profile is based on the plant source and many contain added sugars. Soy milk is recommended for certain medical and/or allergic conditions to cow's milk.

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