

# Drinks for Children and Youth: 2–18 Years

Drinks help children and youth get the fluids they need. Their bodies need fluids to:

- digest food
- cool down
- move nutrients
- remove waste

## How much do children and youth need to drink each day?

Age	Amount of fluid
2–3 years old	4 cups (900 mL)
4–8 years old	5 cups (1200 mL)
9–13 years old	6–7 cups (1600–1800 mL)
14–18 years old	7–10 cups (1800–2600 mL)

**Sometimes children may need to drink more fluids.** For example, children may need to drink more fluids in hot weather, when they're active, or not feeling well.

## Water

**Make water the drink of choice.**

- Offer plain water most often during the day and with meals to meet fluid needs and to quench thirst.
- Use a refillable water bottle when on the go.
- Try flavouring water with mint, cucumber, or fruit.



**Water is the best choice before, during, and after most activity.**

## What about flavoured or sparkling waters?

If offering these drinks, read labels and choose those without added sugar, sugar substitutes, or sodium.

## 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.

If choosing soy beverage, read the nutrition facts table and the list of ingredients. Choose one that is unsweetened or has less than 15% daily value of sugar per cup (250 mL). Shake the soy beverage container before drinking to mix ingredients.

## What about plant-based beverages other than soy?

Other plant-based beverages, such as almond, coconut, and oat beverages, can help meet fluid needs, but may have less protein.

**Read the nutrition facts table and ingredients list on the label and choose one that:**

- has calcium and vitamin D added
- is unsweetened or has less than 15% daily value of sugar per cup (250 mL)
- has at least 6 g protein per cup

To learn more, visit [AHS.ca/NutritionHandouts](https://www.ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts) and search [plant-based beverages](#).



## Other drinks

Most other drinks aren't needed.

If choosing other drinks, look for those with:

- less sugar or other sweeteners
- less caffeine
- little to no added vitamins, minerals, and herbs

The best way to tell what's in a drink is to read the label.

# Read labels to help you choose drinks

## Nutrition facts table

Read the nutrition facts table to find the serving size and % daily value of sugar.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 226 mL	
<b>Calories 100</b>	<b>% Daily Value*</b>
<b>Fat 0 g</b>	<b>0 %</b>
Saturated 0 g	0 %
+Trans 0 g	
<b>Carbohydrate 24 g</b>	
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 24 g	24 %
<b>Protein 0 g</b>	
<b>Cholesterol 0 mg</b>	
<b>Sodium 10 mg</b>	<b>1 %</b>
Potassium 10 mg	1 %
Calcium 0 mg	0 %
Iron 0 mg	0 %
*5% or less is <b>a little</b> , 15% or more is <b>a lot</b>	

## List of ingredients

Check the list of ingredients to see if there is added sugar, caffeine, sugar substitutes, vitamins, minerals, or herbs. Ingredients are listed by weight from most to least.

**Ingredients:** Carbonated water • Sugars (glucose-fructose, sugar) • Caramel colour • Phosphoric acid • Natural flavour • Caffeine

## Caution box

Some drink labels have caution boxes. Read the cautions to see if they apply to children.

**Caution:** Not recommended for those under 14 years old.

## Caffeine

Caffeine is often found in coffee-based drinks, energy drinks, tea, iced tea, and pop. Some side effects of caffeine include trouble sleeping, faster heart rate, and feeling anxious.

Health Canada recommends that children and youth limit caffeine to 2.5 mg per kg body weight per day. For example, a teen who weighs 132 lbs (60 kg) should limit caffeine to 150 mg of caffeine per day. Energy drinks may have up to 180 mg of caffeine in a single serving.

To learn more, visit: [www.Canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-safety/food-additives/caffeine-foods.html](http://www.Canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-safety/food-additives/caffeine-foods.html)

## Sugar

Drinking sugar-sweetened drinks is linked to a higher risk of tooth decay and overweight.

Sugars appear on the list of ingredients in brackets after the name 'Sugars'. Sugar is found in drinks like juice, pop, iced tea, iced coffee drinks, energy drinks, and bubble tea.

## Sugar substitutes

Sugar substitutes make drinks taste sweet. Drinks with sugar substitutes often have less sugar and few nutrients. Sugar substitutes are not needed for children and youth unless a healthcare provider suggests them.

Some names of sugar substitutes on the list of ingredients are:

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

## Vitamins, minerals and herbs

Most drinks with added vitamins, minerals, and herbs are not for children and youth. Sports drinks have added sodium and potassium. They are not needed for most physical activities.

