

## Top 3 Reasons Flavored Milk Is Important in Child Nutrition Programs

The Dietary Guidelines, numerous health organizations and the latest science support the continued role of flavored milk as a core component of child nutrition programs as well as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

### Flavored milk is a nutrient-rich beverage that's good for kids

- Offering flavored low-fat or fat-free milk is an excellent way to increase milk consumption among children and make their diets more nutritious.
- Offering flavored milk can help increase milk consumption and boost overall participation in school meal programs.<sup>1</sup> Concerns about calories, fat and sugar as components of individual foods rather than the overall diet have put nutrient-rich flavored milk at risk of not being offered to children. Limiting access to flavored milk, because of its added sugar, may only have the undesirable effect of further reducing intakes of essential nutrients provided by milk.<sup>2</sup>
- Flavored milk provides the same nine essential nutrients as unflavored milk (calcium, potassium, phosphorus, protein, vitamins A, D and B12, riboflavin and niacin (niacin equivalents)), and can help kids meet their calcium requirements.<sup>3</sup> Kids who consume flavored milk meet their calcium requirements without consuming significantly more added sugar compared to those who do not consume milk.<sup>2</sup>
- Children who drink flavored milk as well as unflavored milk fare better on a variety of nutritional fronts:
  - Flavored milk drinkers have lower intakes of soft drinks and fruit drinks compared to nonconsumers of flavored milk.<sup>4</sup>
  - Flavored milk drinkers consumed more milk than exclusively unflavored milk drinkers.<sup>2</sup>
  - Milk drinkers in general consumed more calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium and vitamin A than non milk drinkers.<sup>2</sup>
  - Flavored milk consumers did not have higher total fat or calorie intakes than non milk consumers.<sup>2</sup>
  - Children who drink flavored and unflavored milk don't have higher body mass index (BMI) than those who do not consume milk.<sup>2</sup>

### Kids love the taste of flavored milk

- According to 2005 USDA data, 66% of the milk chosen by children in schools is flavored; 90% of the milk offered is low-fat or fat-free.<sup>5</sup> Studies have revealed kids' clear nutritious beverage of choice: low-fat chocolate milk, whether or not it's lactose-free<sup>6</sup>
- According to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, adding a small amount of sugar to nutrient-rich foods such as reduced-fat milk products helps enhance their palatability and improves nutrient intake without adding excessive calories.<sup>7</sup>

### Health and nutrition experts recommend flavored milk

- The Institute of Medicine also recognizes the nutritional value of flavored milk with modest amounts of sugar for school children.<sup>8</sup>
- The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages the consumption of low-fat or fat-free white or flavored milk, water or real fruit or vegetable juice as healthful alternatives to soft drinks.<sup>9</sup> According to a telephone survey of 300 pediatricians, the majority (87%) agreed that chocolate milk is a nutritious beverage option for children.<sup>10</sup> Nearly 60% of those surveyed agreed that low-fat and fat-free chocolate milk is "the best beverage source of calcium," placing it above milk substitutes such as calcium fortified orange juice and soy beverages.

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## References

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