

Got Milk? Or Got Soda? What Your Child Drinks Greatly Affects Their Health

The adolescent years are crucial for children's growth and development. The "tween" years (9-13), are considered peak bone growing years. Your child adds 15% of their height and 45% of their bone density during their teen years. There is no other time in life that their bones grow and strengthen like this. If kids consume too little calcium and Vitamin D now, their risk for the bone-crippling disease, osteoporosis significantly increases. Osteoporosis is now considered a pediatric disease with geriatric consequences. Not only is osteoporosis a concern, but consuming high calorie foods instead of low-fat dairy foods is linked to higher body fat and obesity.

Look at these Alarming Statistics:

- In 1945, teens drank 4 times more milk than soda
- In 1979, teens drank 2 times more milk than soda
- In 2004, teens drink 2 times more soda than milk
- 90% of teen girls do not consume enough calcium daily
- 70% of teen boys do not consume enough calcium daily
- 42% increase in wrist fractures over 30 years for kids aged 11-14 years
- 15% of adolescents are overweight or obese compared to 5% 20 years ago

"My Kid Only Likes Flavored Milk!"

But what about flavored milk--is it as healthy since it contains more sugar than regular milk? Research shows that kids and teens that drink flavored milk have higher overall milk consumption than children who do not. Also, young people who drink flavored milk do not have higher added-sugar intake than kids who don't drink it. They drink fewer sodas and fruit drinks than children who don't drink flavored milk. **Between the ages of 9-18, kids need 1,300 mg of calcium.** One 8-ounce serving of milk contains 300 mg of calcium, so kids need at least 4 servings of milk a day. Other great sources of calcium are: cheese, yogurt, tofu, spinach, broccoli, calcium-fortified orange juice, beans and nuts.

The Skinny On Milk

Not only does low-fat milk build strong bones, but new research shows that people who consume 3 servings of low-fat dairy foods as a part of a healthy low-calorie diet, lose more body fat than people who do not consume enough dairy foods. Calcium supplements do not produce the same results. For kids, drinking more milk than soda and other sugary beverages will protect their bones and decrease their risk for obesity.

So stock up your fridge with 1% or skim milk and get rid of the soda, sports drinks, and fruit flavored drinks. Your kid's health depends on it.

Nutrition Tip and Website: To increase your child's calcium intake, offer chocolate milk instead of pop, dip fruit in yogurt, top tortilla chips with shredded mozzarella cheese, or blend tofu into a fruit smoothie. Research shows that parents are the most influential when it comes to their children's eating and drinking habits. Check out this website for more information: <http://www.whymilk.com/moms/index.htm>

