

Mealtime Memo

for Child Care



Magnificent Milk - Have Some Please!

Child care providers are familiar with the need for milk in the diet of young children. Offering milk at breakfast and lunch is a requirement and an option at snack in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Milk is in the dairy group, which includes all fluid milk products, as well as foods made from milk, for example cheese. Also, note that milk must be pasteurized when used in the CACFP. Foods that have little calcium are not considered part of the milk group. Examples are butter, whipped cream, and cream cheese.

As adults we understand that it takes good nutrition for a child to grow properly. Children should eat foods that will supply needed nutrients and support their growth. Foods that they consume should not be empty calorie foods, but should be filled with nutrients that will help their body grow and develop. This Mealtime Memo will provide information on milk, children drinking milk on a regular basis, and how milk helps their body grow. Children that are 1 year old should consume whole milk. Children 2 years and older should consume skim or 1% low-fat milk. Children 24 months old are allowed a one month transition period when changing from whole milk to low-fat or skim milk. Low-fat and skim milk are just as nutritious as whole milk. The major difference is that low-fat and skim milks are lower in calories and fat.



Milk contains nutrients that are needed for growth and development. What are the nutrients? Some of the nutrients include calcium, potassium, vitamin D, and protein. Calcium helps to make bones and teeth strong. Potassium helps to maintain a healthy blood pressure. Vitamin D helps to build and maintain strong bones and helps to maintain proper levels of calcium and phosphorus. Protein helps to grow and build muscles.

Since children watch what their parents drink, the parents are usually the first influence on children's choice to drink milk. Therefore, to encourage the habit, parents can drink milk with them. Consider educating parents on how milk is important for the development of their children. Parents are children's first teachers, and often children will mimic their parent's actions.



While in their care, CACFP operators must provide children with milk at breakfast and lunch daily. It is recommended that young children consume milk several times per day. Teach children about milk, and tell them the reasons why they should drink milk. Explain how it helps the body grow and develop, as well as how it helps the body maintain good health once you stop growing and developing.

Consider visiting a dairy farm or having a farmer come to you. Children will get to see that milk comes from cows. Perhaps they will be able to see a cow being milked. Yes, there could be an entire lesson on the milk we drink!

- Prior to going to visit the farm or having a farmer come to visit, consider teaching a lesson on “One Day in the Life of the Farmer and His Cows.”
- The lesson could include information on different cows, for example the Holstein cow versus the Hereford cow.
 - Which cow(s) provide the most milk that is sold to people?
 - How are cows milked, and could there be an opportunity for children to watch or participate? Keep in mind that farmers may use machines now for milking.

This Memo focused on the importance of including milk in children's diets and how using low-fat milk provides the same nutrients with a lower fat content.

Why is making low-fat food choices important?

- Skim and 1% milks both have all the vitamins and nutrients of whole milk.
- The vitamins and nutrients in milk help the body grow, as well as help sustain the body.
- Milk has several nutrients including calcium, protein, and vitamin D.



Tips When Shopping for Milk

- Read the labels of the foods you purchase. Consider purchasing low-fat cheeses and other low-fat dairy products, as well as the lower fat milk.
- Make a better choice of milk by using 1% low-fat or skim milk.
- Consider the CACFP regulations as a plus when lowering fat in the diet for the children in your care.
 - Remember for ages 2 years and older, you must serve 1% low-fat or skim milk.

References

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