

# **Beverages, Weight Gain, and Growth**

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## **How can making changes to beverages improve the health of my child?**

What your child **drinks** may cause excessive weight gain. American children are more overweight than ever before, yet many are very active and watch what they eat. Most people are unaware that "healthy" choices like juice and sports drinks add unneeded calories without nutrition. They also contribute to tooth decay, especially since they are often consumed between meals. Recent studies have linked soda pop intake and obesity. Liquid sugars may be more easily stored as fat.

Think about how beverages have changed since you were a child. What did you drink with every meal; was it a choice of juices and soft drinks, or was it milk? How big was a "juice glass" at your house? What did you drink with your lunch at school? Did your family car have places for six cans of soda? Did everything you drink taste sweet, and really, really good? Remember lemonade and Kool-aid stands? Those drinks were considered special treats, not daily beverages.

## **What beverages should my child drink?**

School-aged children require about 2200 calories daily for normal growth and good health. Five glasses of juice represent 1/4 of the calories but none of the nutrition required for growth. We recommend that children drink no more than 6 ounces of juice daily. Water should be the beverage offered for thirst. Sports drinks and pop are non-nutritious treats that should be very limited, less than 2 cans per week. Low fat milk is essential to good growth and bone strength.

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**One juice box equals 120 calories which is the same as:**

10 Saltine crackers	2 slices of bread	6 triscuits
18 mini rice cakes	1 1/2 apples	2 1/2 fig newtons
3 peaches	4 large carrots	1 cup diet yogurt
24 celery sticks	2 oranges	3 tangerines
2 cups of grapes	3 cups strawberries	2 1/2 cups watermelon

**Except these foods also include many nutrients and fiber!**

Disclaimer: This document is for informational purposes only and is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Talk with your doctor if you have Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options.

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