

All students should be encouraged to drink GREEN drinks regularly throughout the day. Our body depends on fluids, without it our body cannot function. But what drink choices are recommended and not recommended for students?

Water is best

Drinking water is the best way to quench your thirst. Water ensures adequate hydration and assists in maintaining normal body functions such as body temperature and regular bowel movements.

When it comes from a tap it is free and may have the added bonus of fluoride which assists with developing strong teeth and bones.



Milk

Milk is another great choice for students as it contains many essential nutrients important for growth and development. The calcium found in cow's milk is better absorbed by the body than calcium from other sources. Cow's milk contains Vitamin A and B12 and some other B vitamins, all of which are essential in sustaining growth and development.

Reduced fat milk is the best milk option for students as it contains around half as much saturated fat as full cream milk. Plain milk is preferred to flavoured milk. Small serves of flavoured milk can be useful to encourage milk consumption.



Juice

Whilst rich in vitamin C, folate and potassium, juice can also contain high amounts of sugar and kilojoules. Choose to serve 99% fruit juice only. If fruit juice is consumed in excess, it can replace other nutritious foods in the diet and can contribute to overweight and obesity, (Australian Dietary Guidelines, 2013). For this reason limit serve size to 250ml and consider watering down juice before serving.

Whole fruit is preferable to fruit juice as it is usually a better source of fibre.

Sports Drinks

Sports drinks are often marketed as healthy choices. These types of drinks contain electrolytes such as potassium and sodium however they also contain large amounts of sugar. Most young athletes can get all the necessary nutrients and hydration needed by consuming water before, during and after physical activity and eating a healthy snack such as a piece of fruit before or after exercise.



Carbonated fruit drinks

Carbonated fruit drinks are becoming a popular drink choice for children. Like sports drinks they are often marketed as healthy choices with claims such as “99% fruit juice” and “a healthier alternative to soft drinks”. However these drinks contain large amounts of sugar and they retain little, if any, of the fruit's original nutritional benefits. These types of drinks also pose a dental health risk and can encourage a ‘habit’ of drinking sweet fizzy drinks.

Effect of sugary drinks on health

Sugary and sweetened drinks such as fruit drinks, soft drinks, flavoured mineral waters and cordial should not be offered to children regularly. The consumption of sugary drinks can increase the risk of tooth decay and overweight and obesity in students. Additionally, for young children, a large volume of these drinks can fill a child's small stomach and reduce their appetite for more healthy foods during break times.

Australian researchers found that children aged between 4 and 12 years who drank 500ml of cordial or fruit juice each day were twice as likely to be overweight or obese as children who consumed none.

Verdict

- Water and milk are the best choice of drink for students.
- Plain milk is preferred to flavoured milk, but, small serves of flavoured milk can be useful to encourage milk consumption.
- Fruit juice should be 99% fruit juice and served in small amounts, no larger than 250ml.
- Avoid sugary and sweetened drinks such as soft drinks, fruit drinks, sports drinks, cordials and flavoured mineral water as these types of drinks are high in sugar and increase the risk of tooth decay and overweight and obesity in students.