

# Drinks – Serve water and plain milk

## Water

- Encourage children to drink water when they are thirsty. Tap water is recommended.
- Drinking water instead of sweetened drinks is the best thirst quencher and prevents dental problems, while the fluoride found in tap water can help strengthen teeth and bones.
- Remind and encourage children to drink water regularly throughout the day.

## Milk

- Plain milk is the best choice.
- Reduced fat milk can be given to children over two years of age.
- Calcium fortified soy milk is a suitable alternative to cow's milk. Check the nutrition information panel to make sure that there is at least 100mg calcium per 100ml.

**Tip:** Serve milk as a drink at morning and afternoon tea as an easy and reliable way to meet children's dairy food requirements<sup>1</sup>.

**Myth:** Reduced fat milk is missing all the "good stuff".

### Fact:

1. Many reduced fat products have more protein, calcium and B vitamins than the full fat versions.
2. Full fat milk contains extra kilojoules (energy) and saturated fat, both of which need to be consumed in moderation.

## Non-dairy drinks

- Examples include oat, rice, almond, coconut and quinoa drinks.
- Non-dairy drinks do not provide the protein, calcium and other vitamins and minerals found in cow's milk. They are not suitable alternatives to cow's milk and should only be used if medically advised.

## What about fruit juice?

- Fruit juice is not recommended.
- Fruit juice is not equivalent to fruit. Fruit juice lacks the fibre that is found in whole fruit. A piece of fruit has better nutritional value than a serve of juice.

### Drinks for infants – birth to two years

Breastmilk or infant formula should be the main drink in the first 12 months of life. From around 6 months, small amounts of cooled, boiled tap water can supplement breastmilk or infant formula.

After 12 months, water and full fat cream cow's milk should be the main drinks offered in early childhood services. Tap water is an important source of fluoride for young children and should be encouraged and easily available.

Low fat and reduced fat milks are not recommended in the first 2 years of life, but reduced fat milks (1-2g fat per 100ml) are suitable for children over the age of 2 years.

<sup>1</sup> *Caring for Children: Birth to 5 years, NSW Ministry of Health, 2014, page 92.*