



Chocolate Milk

Milk is a great source of calcium and other important nutrients. Flavorings like chocolate can be added to make milk taste better. However, recently there has been some controversy about including chocolate milk in children's diets and school lunch programs. Here are some facts about chocolate milk and other flavored milk beverages.

Benefits

- **It has lots of important nutrients!** Chocolate milk is a key source of many nutrients, vitamins and minerals including high quality protein, calcium, vitamins A & D, B-12, riboflavin, phosphorus, magnesium, and zinc.
- **It tastes good!** Children will likely drink chocolate milk because it tastes good. The MyPyramid recommendation for milk is 2-3 cups of fat-free or low-fat milk per day. Drinking chocolate milk can make it easier to meet those recommendations while providing children with many important nutrients.
- **It may be easier to digest than plain milk.** Children with lactose intolerance may be better able to digest chocolate milk because the cocoa may slow digestion.



Concerns

- **Should I be worried about the calories?** Chocolate milk has more calories than regular milk, so it is important to keep this in mind when incorporating chocolate milk into a balanced diet. One serving of plain fat-free milk has 85 calories, and chocolate milk has 140 Calories.
- **What about added sugars?** Plain fat-free milk has about 12 grams of sugars, and chocolate milk contains about 25 grams. However, it is unlikely that this relatively small amount of added sugar in chocolate milk contributes to dental carries or childhood obesity.
- **Does it influence taste preferences?** Children who drink chocolate milk may not learn to appreciate the taste of plain milk, although evidence in this area is lacking.
- **Cocoa may affect calcium absorption.** A naturally occurring compound in cocoa called oxalic acid may decrease calcium absorption. However, there is very little oxalic acid in chocolate milk and there is no sustainable evidence that calcium absorption is affected.
- **Caffeine and other stimulants.** Caffeine and theobromine both occur naturally in cocoa and are known to act as stimulants. However, research findings provide no evidence that the levels of these compounds in chocolate milk are harmful.