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NUTRITION Q&A

Q1: What can I do to increase my child's daily milk intake?

Milk is an important part of a child's diet because it provides calcium and vitamin D, which help build strong bones. Kids under age two should drink whole milk for the dietary fats needed for normal growth and brain development. Keep broadening your child's palate by introducing new flavours and textures. Food preferences are set early in life, so help your child develop a taste for healthy foods now. Milk comes in many forms. Milk and milk products like cheese or yoghurt provide the richest and most easily absorbed dietary sources of calcium. Other good sources include green leafy vegetables, nuts and fish like salmon, sardines or herring or still soy milk enriched with calcium. If your child likes these foods it is possible to replace milk, but usually young children would prefer dairy products.

Q2: I have yet to teach my two-year-old to brush his teeth, he drinks a bottle of milk before bedtime – will this have any long term effect on his teeth or should I make him gargle (to clear out the milk residue) before sleeping?

Milk contains sugars in the form of carbohydrates and when this is left in direct contact with teeth for prolonged periods of time, it will allow bacterial growth leading to tooth decay in the long term. Children who are two years old are not able to gargle. It would be

wise to make them drink small amounts of water after each milk feed in order to remove any milk residue in the mouth. It would be a good practice to start teaching your child to brush their teeth by the age of two to three years old. Help your child to establish the habit of brushing their teeth regularly. Do this gradually and they will soon make a habit.

Q3: There are occasions when my toddler gets diarrhoea after drinking milk –how would I know if my toddler is lactose intolerant?

The source of lactose is from milk and milk products. Lactose intolerance can either manifest from birth in which case, your child is born without lactase i.e. the enzyme needed to digest lactose. Such a condition is rare but secondary lactose intolerance is more common due to an acute attack of infective diarrhoea. The mechanism of acquired lactose intolerance is that during an acute attack of diarrhoea there is some amount of damage to the lining of the intestine whereby there is a temporary loss of the enzyme lactase. Thus, your child becomes lactose intolerant and is unable to digest lactose. Their stools become acidic and this will cause redness around the anal area during a bout of diarrhoea. This is the hallmark of lactose intolerance. The treatment here would be to remove all lactose containing milk and food stuff for about a week or so depending on the degree of damage to the intestine, to allow the intestine to heal after which you may resume their normal milk once again.

Q4: What is the difference between growing up milk and the milk adults drink?

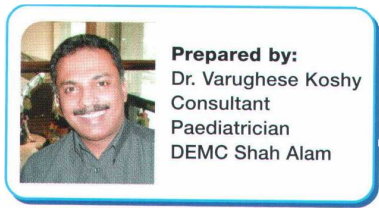
Milk is an important part of a child's diet. It's a good source of energy and protein, and contains a wide range of vitamins and minerals. Milk and milk products are rich sources of calcium, which growing children need to build healthy bones and teeth, it is also necessary for nerve and muscle function. Growing up milk is tailored for the needs of a growing child and is usually fortified with ARA and DHA which is essential for their growing brain. It must be emphasized that adult milk contains higher levels of protein and carbohydrate as well as minerals such as sodium and potassium. This is because as an adult, the body weight is bigger and therefore the requirement will also be equally higher.

Furthermore, growing up milk brands fortify their milk with iron as this is necessary for children to ensure adequate production of haemoglobin, the pigment that carries oxygen in our blood and which gives blood its colour. Depending on the growing up milk brands, there are some that have higher fat content as compared to adult milk. This is to enhance weight gain meant especially for children with poor weight gain. However dependence on milk alone can lead to obesity which is becoming a problem among younger children these days and further heightened by other contributing factors such as the increasing popularity of sugary snacks and fast foods. ☺



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ATTENTION

Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns about your child's growth or nutritional needs.

