



Swap out the Juice and Fuel Kids with Fruit

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children younger than 1 year do not consume any juice. As they grow, children aged 6 and under can enjoy up to 4 ounces of 100% fruit juice per day and children 7 to 18 years can enjoy 8 ounces per day. Fruit juice can be part of a balanced diet if consumed in moderation. When choosing juices, reach for 100% fruit juice and not a “fruit flavored” beverage. However, eating whole fruit, rather than drinking juice, has three benefits: fiber, fuel, and phytonutrients.

- **Fiber:** Fiber is the “meaty” part of the fruit. It is a type of carbohydrate found in foods that come from plants like fruits. It is also found in vegetables, grains, and protein foods like nuts, seeds, beans, and legumes. It plays an important role in disease prevention and management and supports several factors of our overall health. We cannot digest or absorb fiber making it a unique nutrient. When we eat sources of fiber, it supports the healthy bacteria in the gut. Eating fiber regularly also helps move food through the intestines more quickly, helping with bowel movements and reducing constipation. When increasing fiber intake, hydrate properly to help move things along.
- **Fuel:** Fruits contain natural sugars that give us energy when we eat whole fruits and when we drink fruit juice. Often fruit juices contain added sugars, too. Even 100% fruit juice contains more sugar per serving than whole fruit. An eating pattern high in added sugars puts kids at risk of tooth decay and some health problems in the future. When your little one is looking for a snack to fuel them for play, reach for whole fruits instead of fruit juice for sustainable fuel.
- **Phytonutrients:** Phytonutrients are nutrients we only get from plants. These phytonutrients have many different roles in supporting our health. For example, one of these nutrients we often hear about is antioxidants. Antioxidants help to repair cell damage from exposures like pollution, cigarette smoke, sunlight, and even ones formed inside of our bodies. Whole fruits supply our bodies with the nutrients to repair this damage and maintain the health of cells during growth and development. When juicing a fruit, a lot of the nutrients and fiber are lost.

Add whole fruit to meals and snacks throughout the day. Flavor water with fruit like strawberries, oranges, lemons, or limes. When possible, fuel up on fruits for overall health.

References

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