

Plant-Based Beverages

There has been a growing interest in plant-based beverages for many years. Some people are trying to consume more plant-based foods as recommended by Canada's Food Guide. Others may be choosing plant-based beverages because of a milk allergy or lactose intolerance or for cultural, religious, environmental and other personal reasons. Read on to learn more about these drinks.



Plant-based beverages are made from legumes, cashews, almonds, macadamias, coconut, hemp or flax seeds, peas, soy, rice, and grains such as oats. Although these beverages may look like milk and are often marketed as milks, they do not have the same nutrition as cow's milk. Protein, which is an important nutrient for people of all ages, is very low in almost all plant-based beverages. Only soy and pea beverages have similar amounts of protein to cow's milk (8 grams of protein per 250 mL). [Canada's Food Guide](#) recommends an unsweetened fortified soy beverage as a healthy alternative to cow's milk.

Other ingredients in plant-based beverages

These beverages may have other ingredients added such as vitamins (such as calcium and vitamin D), sugars, thickeners and gums (to make the drinks creamier), emulsifiers (to keep the ingredients mixed together) and flavours. Anything added to the beverage will be found in the ingredient list.

Bottom Line

Vegetarian choices can be healthy for people of all ages. If you choose plant-based beverages, make sure they are fortified (have vitamins and minerals added) and look for plain or unflavoured versions for less sugar.

Things to consider:

For children under 2 years of age

Offer human milk, 3.25% cow's milk, or formula to children under 2 years of age.

Plant-based beverages are not recommended as the main milk to drink for children under 2 years of age because these beverages can be low in important nutrients like calories, fat, protein, calcium and vitamin D which are needed for proper growth and development. Plant-based beverages can be used in baking and cooking.

Children 2 years of age and older

If offering a plant-based beverage to a child 2 years of age and older choose a product that:

- Is fortified to provide at least 23% Daily Value of calcium and at least 10% Daily Value of vitamin D per 250 mL (1 cup)
- Provides at least 6 grams of protein per 250 mL
- Contains less than 15% Daily Value (less than 15 grams) of sugar per 250 mL



Helpful resources:

Alberta Health Services handout: [Plant-Based Beverages for Children](#)

Unlockfood.ca resource: [Facts on milk allergies](#)

Health Canada recipe: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/recipes/creamy-smoothie/>

Alberta Health Services recipes: ahs.ca/Recipes

Interested in speaking to a dietitian about plant-based options?

→ Call Healthlink at 811 and ask to speak to a dietitian



→ Or make an appointment with a Registered Dietitian. ahs.ca/nutrition.



Photo by [Yilmaz Akin](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Nutrition sessions available:

- To register for in-person or online infant feeding classes with a dietitian go to: szonenutrition.eventbrite.com
- To view a recording of the Feeding Babies or Mealtime Struggles (Picky Eating) sessions go to bit.ly/3ABKbbo
- **To register for free online Prenatal Nutrition classes** visit bit.ly/onlinenutritionclasses, scroll down to 'Healthy Eating for Pregnancy'

Contact

If you have questions, contact your local Registered Dietitian at Community Health Services:

Medicine Hat 403-502-8200

Brooks 403-501-3300

Lethbridge 403-388-6666

For more information on this or other nutrition topics, go to healthyeatingstartshere.ca

