

[IMAGE]

Too Much Juice

By age one, nearly 90% of all children in the U.S. drink some form of fruit juice. Although fruit juice is marketed as a healthy, natural source of vitamins and minerals, the potential drawbacks from regular juice consumption in early childhood are worthy of careful consideration.

This sentiment is echoed by the authors of a recent study published in the journal *Pediatrics*. The authors suggest that offering juice to infants, especially before solid foods are introduced into the diet, can result in deficiencies in protein, fat, vitamins and minerals found in breast milk. Also, prolonged exposure to the four major sugars found in most fruit juices (sucrose, glucose, fructose and sorbitol) can contribute to early dental problems.

In their conclusions, the authors emphasize a number of points for parents to consider:

- Fruit juice offers little or no nutritional benefit for infants younger than six months, and no added benefits over whole fruit for infants older than six months and young children.
- 100% pure fruit juice or reconstituted juice can be a healthy addition to a well-balanced diet; however, fruit drinks (often containing 10% or less of actual juice and larger quantities of artificial sugar and/or flavor) are not nutritionally equivalent to fruit juice.
- Juice is not considered appropriate in the management of dehydration or diarrhea.
- Excessive juice consumption is associated with diarrhea, flatulence, abdominal distention and tooth decay.
- Calcium-fortified juices provide a bioavailable source of calcium, but lack other important nutrients found in breast, formula or cow's milk.

Consult your team of health care professionals before, during and after pregnancy to ensure that your child grows up healthy and happy.

Reference:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Nutrition. The use and misuse of fruit juice in pediatrics. *Pediatrics* 2001: Vol. 107, No. 5, pp1210-13.

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