

Exposure to Food and Beverage and Related Effects on Oral and General Health

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A healthy and balanced diet should be promoted early in childhood which is considered as a crucial period for the optimal growth and development. Experts across health care disciplines recognize the importance of breastfeeding during infancy. Human milk and breastfeeding of infants provide health, nutrition, physical, psychological, social, economic, and environmental advantages while significantly decreasing risk of acute and chronic diseases. However, children breastfed nocturnally or more than 12 months or more frequently had a susceptibility to increased caries risk.

National Health and Nutrition Organizations, recommend breast milk, infant formula, water, and plain milk for children under age five. They suggest that plain (i.e., non-flavoured, sweetened, or carbonated) fluoridated water should be introduced beginning at six months of age for children who have started solid foods to familiarize the child with water as well as with drinking from a cup which is a safe and effective method for reduction of caries. They also caution against beverages that are sources of added sugars, including flavoured milks, or contain low calorie sweeteners. Unfortunately, it has been found that this trend is very difficult to counter as sugar consumption continues to grow alarmingly due in part to the easy availability of foods and drinks rich in added sugars from vending machines, supermarkets, fast-food restaurants and often further reinforced by aggressive marketing. Across the globe, food marketing to children is pervasive, and the vast majority of products most heavily marketed to young people like sugary breakfast cereals, soft drinks, candy, salty snacks, and fast foods which are calorie dense, nutrient poor, and high in added saturated fat and/or trans-fat, sugar, or sodium. Marketing of unhealthy foods influences children's food and brand knowledge, preferences, requests, purchases, and eating behaviors. Numerous researchers have documented a strong link between food marketing to childhood obesity. The global increase in childhood obesity coincides with the marked increases in the food and beverage marketing aimed at children. When consumed in excess, beverages containing sugar or saturated fats can be harmful. The obesity rate increases through childhood and adolescence, and youth with obesity are at increased risk for health problems (e.g., heart disease, type 2 diabetes) during the teenage years and beyond.

The American Heart Association recommends that children less than two years of age avoid added sugars in their diets. Sugar-sweetened beverages include any liquid (e.g., regular soda, fruit drinks, sports drinks, tea and coffee drinks, energy drinks) with added sugar (e.g., fructose, corn syrup, sucrose [table sugar. many infants are provided 100 percent juice and cow's milk before age one, which can increase their risk for nutrient (e.g., iron¹⁴) deficiencies. American Association of Pediatrics state that juice should not be introduced to infants before one year of age. Carbonated soda consumption was negatively associated with vitamin A intake in all age strata, calcium intake in children younger than 12 years, and magnesium intake in children aged six years and older. Many soft drinks also contain significant amounts of caffeine which, if consumed regularly, may lead to increased, even habitual, usage. The Dietary *Guidelines for Americans* also provides specific quantitative recommendations including limiting: breastfeeding of infants prior to 12 months of age to ensure the best possible health and developmental and psychosocial outcomes for infants, avoid items that have added sugars, avoid foods and beverages with added sugars for those younger than age 2, Saturated fat should be consumed less than 10 percent of calories per day starting at age two, Sodium: Less than 2,300 milligrams per day and even less for children younger than age 14. Additionally, the AHA recommends limiting consumption of added sugars to no more than six percent of calories, for children and adolescents, their

recommended limit is less than 25 grams (100 calories or approximately six teaspoons) of added sugar per day. recommendations from the USDA for individuals aged two and older to consume a diet of nutrient-dense, lean or low-fat foods from across five food groups (i.e., fruits, vegetables, protein, grains, and dairy) that are prepared without added salt, starches, sugars, or fat.

Overall, the researchers suggest a powerful influence of food marketing exposure on children's preferences, attitudes and consumption of products which are associated with promotion techniques, particularly with regard to television commercials, and the social media marketing, advergame or techniques used in packaging of products. The editorial states the need and essentiality to identify and study the vehicles of promotion and marketing techniques which require further assessment and research to strengthen the current body of evidence regarding Exposure to food and beverage and related effects on oral and general health.

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