Toddler Milks are NOT Recommended by Experts

Toddler milks are products typically produced by infant formula companies and marketed for children (12-36 months) as the next step after infant formula. However, experts recommend against providing these drinks to toddlers. They consist primarily of powdered milk, added sugar (corn syrup solids or other sweeteners), and vegetable oil. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends children younger than age 2 consume no added sugars. In recent years, formula manufacturers have stepped up their advertising of toddler milks and sales are increasing rapidly.

“There are no clear needs for toddler milks or drinks. Needed nutrients can be obtained from cow milk or fortified soy beverage and appropriate solid foods... A variety of nutrient-dense complementary foods and beverages without added sugars should be emphasized for achieving nutrient recommendations.”

- 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

“[Toddler milks] ... offer no unique nutritional value beyond what could be obtained with healthy foods; furthermore, they may contribute added sugars to the diet. Therefore, they are not recommended as part of a healthy diet in early childhood.”

- Healthy Beverage Consensus Statement endorsed by AAP, AHA, AND, and AAPD
Advertising and package claims imply that these products are beneficial, even necessary, for toddlers’ nutrition, cognitive development, digestive health, and growth. These messages may lead caregivers to believe that these products are a solution for picky eating and provide nutrients that their child cannot get from the family diet. UConn Rudd Center research found that most caregivers of toddlers (60%) mistakenly believed that product claims meant that toddler milks provide nutrition that toddlers do not get from other foods.

"In a survey of over 500 caregivers, 22% reported serving toddler milk to their infant (6-11 months), but these products don't provide the nutrition that infants need."

- UConn Rudd Center Research

Toddler Milk Marketing is Confusing

Toddler milks are marketed similarly to infant formula from the same brands. Their labeling and branding confuse parents and make it difficult to know which products are appropriate for infants versus toddlers.

KEEP IT SIMPLE, KEEP IT REAL
Water and Plain Milk: The Only Drinks Toddlers Need*

For more information on Healthy Drinks for Toddlers, click here.

*The American Academy of Pediatrics also recommends continuation of breastfeeding for 1 year or longer as mutually desired by mother and infant.