

# Milk Facts: From Birth and Beyond



- **Breast milk is the healthiest milk for infants and the only milk needed for the first 12 months of life.** Breast milk changes with time to meet the specific nutritional needs of the infant and increases in supply as the infant nurses more frequently. Artificial milk is only needed in rare cases (i.e. HIV positive mother) and is an unnecessary expense when breast milk can be utilized. Refer to WIC for infant nutrition needs.
- **Whole milk is recommended only for children between 12 and 24 months.** The extra fat and calories in whole milk are important for brain development during this period of growth.
- **The healthiest milk for anyone age 2 and older is nonfat or fat-free milk.** Whole and 2% reduced fat milk contain too much saturated fat, which is a major risk factor for heart disease. Milk was found to be the largest source of saturated fat for children and the third largest source of saturated fat in the adult American's diet.
- **Fat-free and 1% milk are great sources of calcium and vitamins, with little or no saturated fat.** Fat-free and 1% milk do not have fewer nutrients than whole or 2% milk, just less fat and cholesterol.



**1% and fat-free milk may taste better than you think.** In blind taste tests, 9 out of 10 people liked the taste of low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk.

**Simple Steps to 1% or Nonfat Milk** - If you are used to drinking whole milk or are having difficulty switching, first switch to 2%, then to 1%, then to nonfat. You can even mix two types of milk together. The gradual changes will make it a much easier transition.



**Note:** Usually children will drink whatever milk you use and will not complain about the switch. However, if needed, adding a little chocolate or strawberry flavoring to nonfat milk is better than giving 2% or whole milk. Dry milk is also nonfat milk and is very healthy as well.

*For more information about breastfeeding, milk, or nutrition, contact your local WIC Program.*