Research shows that what children drink from birth through age five has a big impact on their health – both now and for years to come. While every child is different, the nation’s leading health organizations agree that for most kids, the following recommendations can help to set children on a path for healthy growth and development. As always, consult with your health care provider about your child’s individual needs.

**ALL KIDS 5 AND UNDER**

should avoid drinking flavored milks, toddler formulas, plant-based/non-dairy milks*, caffeinated beverages and sugar- and low-calorie sweetened beverages, as these beverages can be big sources of added sugars in young children’s diets and provide no unique nutritional value.

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*NOTES: Evidence indicates that, with the exception of fortified soy milk, many plant-based/non-dairy milk alternatives lack key nutrients found in cow’s milk. Our bodies may not absorb nutrients in these non-dairy milks as well as they can from regular milk. Unsweetened and fortified non-dairy milks may be a good choice if a child is allergic to dairy milk, lactose intolerant, or whose family has made specific dietary choices such as abstaining from animal products. Be sure to consult with your health care provider to choose the right milk substitute to ensure that your child is still getting adequate amounts of the key nutrients found in milk, such as protein, calcium, and vitamin D, which are essential for healthy growth and development.