

# HEALTHY DRINKS. HEALTHY KIDS.

## Healthy Beverage Consumption in Early Childhood

Recommendations from Key National Health  
and Nutrition Organizations

### low-calorie sweetened beverages

#### Healthy Drinks, Healthy Kids

Research shows that what children drink – from birth through age 5 – can have a big impact on their health. That’s why some of the nation’s leading experts on health and nutrition developed recommendations to help parents and caregivers choose what’s best for kids. The full recommendations can be found at [HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org](https://HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org). This brief provides more details about *low-calorie sweetened beverages*.

### What are low-calorie sweetened beverages (LCSBs)?

These are beverages with no- or reduced-calorie sweeteners. The term low-calorie sweetener (LCS) includes eight sweeteners that are permitted for use in food and drinks: saccharin, aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, neotame, advantame, stevia, and monk fruit. Other names for low-calorie sweeteners include non-nutritive sweeteners, artificial sweeteners, sugar substitutes, and sugar alternatives. Some drinks may be labeled as having “no artificial sweeteners,” but may still contain stevia or monk fruit, which are not considered artificial sweeteners but are a type of low-calorie sweetener. You can find out if a product has an LCS by checking the ingredients list for the name of one or more of the eight LCSs allowed to be used in the United States.

#### So, what do experts recommend about LCSBs?



#### Why aren't these beverages recommended for young children?

Little bodies are going through major mental and physical developments, and we now have more evidence than ever that what happens early in a child’s life affects his or her health later on. There isn’t consistent evidence about the long-term health impact of low-calorie sweetened beverages, and there is little evidence on the health impact of drinking LCSBs during early childhood in particular. In addition, low-calorie sweetened beverages don’t have any unique nutritional benefits.

Beverages with low-calorie sweeteners are a better choice than sugar-sweetened beverages (such as soda or fruit-flavored drinks). But, beverages with low-calorie sweeteners still taste sweet, and minimizing kids’ exposure to sweet foods and drinks early on could help them develop healthy habits. It’s best to stick with other beverages, like plain water, milk, and maybe a little bit of 100% juice.

#### Did you know?

- It’s hard to estimate an amount of low-calorie sweeteners that kids take in because food and beverage companies don’t have to report the amount of low-calorie sweeteners used in their products. But data on the U.S. food supply seem to show that the use of low-calorie sweeteners is increasing, and that more kids are consuming low-calorie sweeteners than before.

#### Thirsty for more?

Visit [HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org](https://HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org)  
to find more information on other drinks such as:

- Water
- Milk
- Juice
- Plant-Based, Non-Dairy Milk
- Toddler Milk
- Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

Healthy  
Eating  
Research

These recommendations were developed by experts at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), and the American Heart Association (AHA) under the leadership of Healthy Eating Research (HER) with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.