MAKING THE BEST BEVERAGE CHOICES FOR YOUR BREAKFAST PROGRAM

This tool is designed to **guide schools in their beverage offerings**. When discussing beverages, **approach conversations with kindness and neutrality,** as words can play a role in children's nutrition education and relationship with food. Breakfast time is an opportunity to **foster positive food experiences and develop balanced eating habits**.

BEVERAGES TO PRIORITIZE

1. Water

Water is the best choice for hydration, playing a crucial role in overall health. It is also the most accessible and affordable choice of beverage. **Encouraging regular water consumption helps establish long-term habits that support well-being throughout the day**.

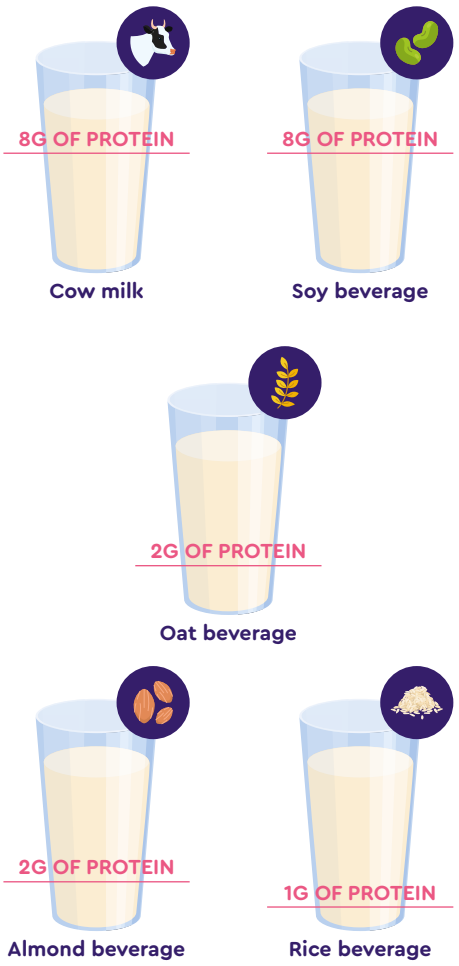
2. Protein-rich beverages

Milk and soy beverages are nutritious breakfast options and good sources of protein, eliminating the need for an additional protein food when paired with whole grains and fruits or vegetables. **Plant-based beverages are not equal when it comes to protein content. Make sure to chose a protein-rich beverage.**

3. Other beverages

Other plant-based beverages such as oat, rice and almond beverages don't naturally contain enough protein to be considered a primary protein source. But choices with no or minimal added sugar can still complement a meal. To ensure a balanced breakfast, it is important to include a protein source when serving these drinks.

Protein Content of Beverages



Last updated: July 2025

BEVERAGES TO PRIORITIZE – CONTINUED

Smoothies

Smoothies can also be a nutritious beverage option. Depending on their ingredients, they can fall into the fruit and vegetables category. Plus, they can provide protein if made with yogurt, seed butter, soy butter, tofu, milk or soy beverage.

Be sure to refer to the smoothie section of our cookbook for some nutrient-packed recipes your students are sure to enjoy.

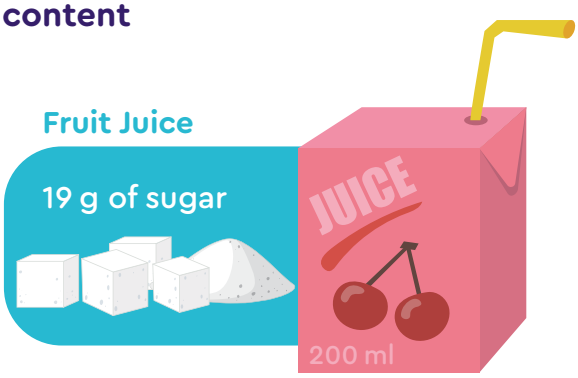


SWEETENED BEVERAGES — WHY ARE FRUIT JUICES AND CHOCOLATE MILK NOT RECOMMENDED FOR BREAKFAST?

Fruit juices and chocolate milk are in the **sugary drinks category** in Canada's Food Guide. Therefore, they are not prioritized as breakfast beverages due to **their high sugar content**, similar to that found in **soft drinks**. Moreover, although fruit juices come from real fruit, they lack the fibre and satiety benefits of whole fruits, even when freshly squeezed.

Soft drinks sugar content









*Milk has a naturally occurring sugar called lactose.

A NOTE ON SWEETENERS, CAFFEINE AND ENERGY DRINKS

Artificial sweeteners are substances that impart sweetness to foods and beverages while containing little or no calories. **These additives can reinforce a preference for overly sweet foods**, and products labelled as "diet" or "light" are often tied to diet culture. **We discourage their use** to promote taste education, help children **develop an appreciation for less sweet flavors**, and support our goal of fostering a balanced and positive relationship with food.





Caffeine-free beverages are the best choice for children. **Their smaller body weight makes them more sensitive to the effects of caffeine**, which can include nervousness, irritability and sleep disturbances. Many caffeinated drinks also contain **high amounts of sugar or artificial sweeteners**, making them less suitable for a nutritious breakfast.



By offering unsweetened or minimally sweetened drinks like water, cow's milk and plant-based alternatives, children are encouraged to explore flavours beyond sweetness and develop a preference for less sugary options.

These guidelines support overall health, well-being and sustainable habits, setting children up for academic success.

Visit the School's Corner section of our website for more nutrition tips and recipe ideas.