Fortified milks for which there are no compositional regulations: milks marketed for children 1 year+

Product information for fortified milks marketed for children 1 year + can be found at ***www.firststepsnutrition.org/milks-marketed-for-children***

Key points

Fortified milks marketed for young children – often called growing-up milks or toddler milks,– are offered by the infant milk manufacturers for children from 1 year of age. ***There are no specific compositional, labelling and marketing regulations for these products but they use similar branding and labelling as infant formula and follow-on formula to suggest they are part of an infant and young child's feeding journey.***

These milks are not necssary in the diets of children over 1 year (EFSA, 2013). The NHS says that there is no evidence to suggest that growing up and toddler milks provide nutritional benefis for children. There is some concern that these milks may offer the wrong balance of nutrients.

Growing-up and toddler milks provide higher quantities of some micronutrients such as vitamin A, vitamin D, iron and zinc than cows' milk but they are generally sweeter than cows' milk. They are more expensive than cows' milk.

Full-fat cows' milk is a suitable choice as the main drink for most toddlers from the age of 1 year, who should be obtaining the majority of their nutrients from food rather than relying on fortified milk products. From the age of 2 years, children who are growing normally and eating well can move on to semi-skimmed cows' milk.

All children aged 1-4 years in the UK are recommended to take daily vitamin drops of vitamins A, D and C to act as a population-wide nutritional safety net and therefore fortified milks are not needed as a source of vitamin D.
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Fortified milk drinks for children over 1 year of age, often called growing-up milks and toddler milks, are offered by the infant formula manufacturers as the main milk for toddlers from 1 year of age, Stage 3 milks are marketed for children 1-2 years and stage 4 milks for 2-3 year olds. Fortified milks aimed at older toddlers aged 2 to 3 years are offered as a semi-skimmed version of the milks marketed for 1-2 year olds. These milks are lower in fat, carbohydrates and protein than growing-up milks for younger toddlers, but the vitamin and mineral content remains similar.

Despite the fact there are no specific compositional, labelling and marketing regulations for these products manufacturers market them with the same packaging as infant formula and follow-on formula suggesting that children should move on to stage 3 and stage 4 milks as a normal part of their food journey.

It is recommended that toddlers eat a good variety of foods to supply the majority of their nutrients rather than relying on fortified milk products. Full-fat cows' milk is suitable as the main drink for most toddlers from the age of 1 year, alongside a varied diet. From the age of 2 years, children who are growing normally and eating well can move on to semi-skimmed cows' milk. Other animal milks and plant based milk alternatives can be offered instead of cows' milk and for more information on eating well for children under the age of 5 years see www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-resources.

In 2013 the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) produced a scientific opinion which stated:

"No unique role of young-child formulae with respect to the provision of critical nutrients in the diet of infants and young children living in Europe can be identified, so that they cannot be considered as a necessity to satisfy the nutritional requirements of young children when compared with other foods that may be included in the normal diet of young children."
(EFSA, 2013)

Marketing for fortified milks has focused on the inability of the diet to provide enough vitamin D and iron for children. Marketing makes no mention of the public health policy for children to have vitamin drops between 1-4 years of age, and the importance of playing outside in the summer sunshine for skin exposure to UV light. Iron should come from foods in the diet and not a sweetened fortified milk.

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR, 2011) in their assessment on these milks stated that milk products, which are designated as toddler milk or children's milk, are not adjusted to the nutritional needs of children aged one to three years. Toddler milk products supply other micronutrients such as iron and zinc in higher amounts than cows' milk and this leads to an uncontrolled intake of these nutrients and involves the risk of a nutrient oversupply.

They also state: '*In a balanced diet for young children toddler milk is superfluous. Even if some groups of young children are not optimally supplied with some micronutrients, this cannot be compensated by substituting toddler milk for cow milk, because it is questionable whether the products are actually consumed by those who would benefit from an additional nutrient supply'.*

The change from infant formula to cows' milk involves a taste transition for infants who should become accustomed to a less sweet taste in their main milk drink. Some fortified

milks have a higher carbohydrate content than animal milk. Lactose is not counted as a free sugar when intrinsically present in milk products but when it is added it is counted as a free sugar in the UK. Some fortified milks also contain maltodextrin as an additional carbohydrate.

Fortifed milks for children 1 year+ for which there are no compositional, labelling or marketing regulations are considered along side **baby foods** on the First Steps Nutrition Trust website at **www.firststepsnutrition/milks-marketed-for-children**

References

BfR (2011) https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/press_information/2011/29/toddler_milk_drinks_are_not_better_than_cow_milk-126749.html

European Food Safety Authority (2013). *Scientific opinion on nutrient requirements and dietary intakes of infants and young children in the European Union.* Available at http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3408.htm