

Beverages and Screen Time in Early Childhood Education: Information for Childcare Providers

All children deserve a healthy start. Alarming, one in three children born in 2000 is expected to develop diabetes by 2050. For African American and Latino children, that figure is one out of two. To improve the health of our youngest children, Philadelphia's Board of Health now recommends childcare providers limit screen time and avoid giving kids sweet drinks, including 100% juice.



The recommendation states:

- No sweetened drinks in early childhood settings
- No fruit juice (including 100% juice) in early childhood settings
- Water should be available, easily accessible to children throughout the day and offered with meals and snacks
- Screen time for children aged 2 years and older limited to 30 minutes per week
- No screen time for children under age 2 in early childhood settings

For more information, contact:

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What childcare providers can do:

- For children over 2 years, serve water or unsweetened low fat (1%) or non-fat milk instead of sweetened beverages or juice. For infants 0 through 5 months, provide only breast milk or infant formula. Provide supportive environments for mothers who are breastfeeding.
- Have water available and offered throughout the day. Try putting out child-sized pitchers so children can pour their own water. Add lemon slices, watermelon chunks, or berries for color and flavor.
- Instead of screen time, read a book, play a game, bring out arts and crafts, sing a song, have a dance party, or go on a scavenger hunt!
- Provide communication in family handbooks regarding best practices for beverages and screen time; collaborate with families to help them follow these recommendations at home



Why this matters:

- Taste preferences form at a very young age. We can protect our children's future by making sure they develop healthy food preferences and stay active.
- Sweetened drinks like soda, fruit punch, sweetened teas and sports drinks are the biggest source of added sugars in our diets.
- Juice is also very sweet and contributes to cavities and, over time, diabetes. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no juice for children under age 1, and no more than 4 ounces a day for older children. Many children get far more than that at home already.
- Philadelphia has high quality tap water, and it is free. Teaching children to enjoy water when they are thirsty will help keep them healthy as they grow.
- Sitting in front of a screen puts children at risk for not getting enough movement, which can lead to diabetes and other health problems.