

Micronutrients in milk drinks for young children

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Milk drinks for young children, i.e. toddlers, available on the market are referred to as toddler milk or children's milk. The manufacturers of these products often advertise these to be – in contrast to cow milk – adjusted to serve the specific nutritional needs of young children. In addition to protein content, they attribute this product characteristic to micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). The vitamin and mineral content in milk drinks for young children differ – in some cases greatly – from those in cow milk.

The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) contends that milk drinks for young children should contain amounts of micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) comparable to those in cow milk. This contention is based on the fact that if the amount of a micronutrient in a milk drink for young children is lower than that in cow milk, the total intake of that nutrient could be negatively affected, which is undesirable. By the same token, a micronutrient content that is greater than that in cow milk would also be unfavourable as this could lead to uncontrolled intake. Even in the case of sodium, of which young children tend to take in very high quantities though a low intake is desirable, the substitution of cow milk with a milk drink for young children that is low in sodium does not lead to a significant reduction in the total sodium intake and thus no health benefit.

According to BfR, a well-balanced children's diet does not require special dairy products for young children. Even if some groups of toddlers are not ideally supplied with micronutrients, this lack cannot be compensated by replacing cow milk with toddler milk, the consumption of which is not targeted to needy children.

The full version of this BfR Opinion is available in German on <http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/mikronaehrstoffe-in-kleinkindermilchgetraenken.pdf>