

# Chocolate Milk Debate Rages in Schools

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<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/chocolate-milk-debate-rages-schools-calcium-important-calories/story?id=13359739>

Chocolate milk, that sweet childhood pleasure, has become the center of an intense health debate. Some health experts believe it contributes to childhood obesity leading many school districts to place limits on its sale or ban it outright. But many doctors and nutritionists say leaving it off the menu deprives children of valuable nutrients they aren't likely to make up elsewhere. Parents are left wondering whether it's okay for their kids to drink it or not.

Milk consumption has plummeted from 25 to 20 gallons per year per person since 1990, even as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration reports that most kids don't get enough calcium and several other "shortfall" nutrients milk offers in abundance. Increasingly, children tend to drink the majority of their milk at school and increasingly, the majority of the milk they drink is flavored -- more than 70 percent of it according to the Milk Processor Education Program, the dairy industry's advocacy group.

There lies the dilemma: Provide kids with essential nutrients lacking in their diet, or limit their access to sugary, high-calorie foods?

"Flavored milk is far less sugary and tends to have fewer calories and more nutrition than beverages like soda," said Keith Ayoob, associate clinical professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the Albert Einstein School of Medicine in New York City. "Children who drink flavored milk are no more likely to be overweight and are more likely to get enough calcium and eat a better diet than kids who don't."

There is support to this claim. A survey of 58 elementary and secondary schools across the country that removed the chocolate version of moo juice from cafeterias for two years and offered only the white version found a 32-64 percent drop in the amount kids drank depending on the grade, in part because they stopped fully draining the carton.

"That isn't even the whole story either. Kids will simply hold their thirst until after school and head to the nearest corner store to order something that is a far worse choice. Better to give them the chocolate milk." Ayooob said.

### **Chocolate Milk: Healthy Compromise, or Just Too Sweet?**

But not everyone agrees.

"This is like asking your kids to eat more apples by giving them apple pie," said Ann Cooper, a leading advocate for healthy [school lunches](#). "Chocolate milk is just sugary soda in drag."

While complete school bans are on the increase, some have yielded to pressure from students, parents and special interest groups and settled on a compromise of sorts. They've ordered reformulated the beverages that are lower in fat and calories and that replace high fructose corn syrup with sugars made from sucrose or beets.

Compared to typical half pint of chocolate milk which has 170 calories, 28 grams of sugar and one percent fat, the new kind has just 130 calories, 22 grams of sugar and almost no fat. A 20-ounce bottle of cola has 150 calories and 40 grams of sugar.