

# Food for Thought

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## Caffeine

Most parents wouldn't give their young child a mug of coffee but might routinely serve soft drinks containing caffeine. Drinks with caffeine are everywhere, but it's wise to keep caffeine consumption to a minimum. Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, chocolate, soda, and other food and drinks.



### How Caffeine Affects You

Caffeine stimulates the central nervous system. It can make people feel more alert and energetic and has similar effects in kids and adults. Too much caffeine can cause:

- Jitteriness & nervousness
- Upset stomach
- Headaches
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increased heart rate
- Increased blood pressure

Especially in young kids, it doesn't take a lot of caffeine to produce these effects. Kids are more sensitive to caffeine than adults. The effects of caffeine can last up to 6 hours.

### Other reasons to limit kids' caffeine consumption include:

- Caffeinated drinks, like cola, coffee beverages, and energy drinks, often contain empty calories. Kids and teens who fill up on them get a lot of calories without the vitamins and minerals they need. For example, they don't contain the calcium kids need from milk to build strong bones and teeth. And too many sweetened drinks can lead to extra weight gain.

### Foods and Beverages with Caffeine

Kids get most of their caffeine from sodas, but it's also found in energy drinks, coffee, tea, chocolate, and coffee ice cream.

Some parents may give their kids iced tea in place of soda, thinking that it's a better alternative. But iced tea can contain as much sugar and caffeine as soda.

### Cutting Caffeine

The best way to cut caffeine (and added sugar) is to eliminate soda, iced tea, energy drinks, and coffee drinks. Instead, offer water, milk, or flavored or infused water.

If your child consumes a lot of caffeine, cut back slowly. Otherwise, they can get headaches, have trouble concentrating, and feel tired, irritable, or depressed.



### Strawberry Smoothie

2 ice cubes  
1 cup fat-free milk  
2/3 c. frozen strawberries  
1/3 cup cottage cheese  
1 ½ tsp sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla

Pour all of the ingredients into a blender. Put the lid on the blender and blend for 45 to 60 seconds until smooth. Pour your smoothie into a glass and enjoy.



### Peach Freeze

½ cup fat-free milk  
1 cup sliced peaches (either fresh or canned; if canned, use peaches packed in their own juice instead of syrup)

1 tsp. sugar

Pour milk into an ice cube tray and freeze until solid. Put the "milk cubes", peaches and sugar into the blender. Put the lid on the blender and blend on high speed until everything is all mixed together and very smooth. Pour your peach freeze into serving dishes and serve right away.

### Tropical Smoothie

3/4 cup frozen mango chunks  
3/4 cup frozen pineapple chunks  
3/4 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt

1. Combine all ingredients in a blender and mix until smooth.
2. Add a little water if the mixture doesn't blend easily.
3. Pour the smoothie into two glasses and enjoy.



Sources: <http://kidshealth.org> retrieved 06/02/25

**Eat Smart Idaho offers FREE classes that can help you learn how to eat well for less! During this challenging time stay tuned for some upcoming classes offered online.**

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