

## Fruit Juice and Kids: How Sweet it is - Frankly Speaking EP 22

### Transcript Details

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Dr. Frank Domino

You are seeing Maria, a three year old who comes in for her well-child check with her grandmother, who watches her four to five days a week while her parents are at work. Maria is the youngest of four children; the oldest is fourteen. You notice that grandma hands Maria a bottle, and what's in it is apple juice. Joining me today is Susan Feeney, nurse practitioner and Coordinator of the Family Nurse Practitioner Tract at the University of Massachusetts Medical School Graduate School of Nursing. Welcome to the show, Susan.

Susan Feeney:

Thank you Frank. Good to be here.

Dr. Domino:

I'm so glad you brought this case up because I think we're seeing lots of children who are getting a variety of foods that are easily found and that were once thought to be healthful. Fruit juice is high on everyone's radar right now. Can you tell us a little bit about what the risks are of drinking fruit juice?

Susan Feeney:

Sure. Well first of all, a little bit of the history is for a long time pediatricians recommended fruit juice, and the reason was it was a good source of water to be given to kids when they started foods and that it did help with constipation. That's part of the history here. The pros are that

there are minerals and there's vitamins, and it's easily consumed, that many of these juices are fortified with vitamin D, and with calcium. But the problem is they have a very high sugar content, and it can be consumed very quickly. And they will satisfy a child so that they won't wanna eat other food, so it actually can contribute to obesity and malnutrition, underweight. There's absolutely no added benefit to having fruit juice in the diet. The recommendations are that it can replace a serving in an older child, of a fruit, but it certainly has no benefit over a whole fruit.

Dr. Domino:

That's really important, and I'm so glad that the American Academy of Pediatrics came out with a position statement. Can you tell us a little bit about what the AAP has recommended?

Susan Feeney:

Certainly. They've really broken it down into the different ages. From birth to six months they're very clear: Absolutely no fruit juice. They feel that number one should be breast milk exclusive. If for some reason that can't be the case, then formula. And that fruit juice will do nothing but compete with the caloric intake with the breast milk, which has everything that a child needs. And then it's between six to 12 months, again they really caution parents to avoid fruit juice, but if it's medically necessary and the hint here is if you have a child who has some constipation in a small amount, pear or prune because of the sorbitol content can help with the constipation. It should be used in small portions, note like 4 to 6 ounces and should replace a fruit serving. Really to avoid it in that first, the first six months completely, and six to 12 months only if medicinally approved. And the other thing they point out is it should be in a cup.

That if you're gonna give fruit juice, it should be in a cup and not in a bottle because of the dental caries, and the fact that kids will suck on this all day, and it'll compete with more nutrient dense food. Then from one to six years it can be instituted at six ounces a day as a replacement for one of the fruit servings. But they make it very clear, there's no benefit to it. They'd rather kids get their fruit serving in a whole fruit because of the fiber and because the intake is slower, they're gonna have a slower rise in their blood sugar. And then seven to 18 years, they say no more than

eight ounces a day and in this group it isn't as big a problem but that's where the energy drinks come in and the other types of drinks. But it's really in the infancy through preschool and early school age where we see a lot of fruit juice.

Dr. Domino:

That's terrific. Really limiting fruit juices throughout childhood seems like a wise, wise idea but then what should you be giving them to drink?

Susan Feeney :

Well, quite frankly, water and milk. Whole milk until the first year of life, and then they can go to a 2% and that water really should be the go-to liquid. We wanna limit any sugary beverages, and it is tough for parents because they wanna have something that is enticing. A lot of kids don't like water. But the concept is if you introduce it early in childhood, I'm thinking even about my own kids, the concept of giving them water at seven months seemed like a foreign concept. If you introduce water earlier, children will be used to it in and be able to drink it and may actually like it.

Dr. Domino:

It sounds like the American Academy of Pediatrics is telling us that all juice is bad. Is that true for even 100% juice?

Susan Feeney:

No. They only recommend 100% juice too, so there's many different products out there. A 100% juice means it's made from 100% juice, it's not made... If it's less than a certain concentration, then it comes under the category of cocktail or beverage, and they absolutely say if you gonna give a fruit juice give a 100% fruit juice, but to limit it to those portions that I mentioned because of the high sugar content. The carbohydrate content is anywhere from 11% to 16% and milk is 7% carbohydrate. The other thing that fruit juice doesn't have is protein, and it doesn't have a lot of the other nutrients so it's just a high sugar content. If you're going to give a fruit juice, and it can be given, then they say give it with a meal with an older child, really keep it to the 100% fruit

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juice.

Dr. Domino:

All right, just to quickly summarize, no juice in the first year of life unless it's absolutely medically necessary. Give it in a glass and really limit in the first 18 years of life as a fruit serving. Now one thing I thought was very important from this study was that they said when you give a juice, you give it as part of meal.

Susan Feeney:

Yes.

Dr. Domino:

Give it typically after they've eaten the more appropriate calorie dense foods as sort of a treat rather than just something that they consume, is that right?

Susan Feeney:

That is absolutely correct. They made a point of saying that for your toddlers and pre-schoolers and school age that it should be part of a meal. And so that they're not filling up on that liquid. And what was interesting is we often think of it associating worsening the risk of obesity, but in many kids it actually can worsen malnutrition and underweight because they're getting their calories and they feel satiated and it's not giving them the nutritional benefit they need.

Dr. Domino:

They need. Okay so now we've got a good solid recommendation. What are we going to say to Maria's grandmother?

Susan Feeney :

That's a tough one. First thing you have to do is you have to... You can't make an assumption, so you'd wanna at least ask grandma, "What's a typical day?" and "I noticed you have a bottle here and she's three, right?"

Dr. Domino:

She's three.

Susan Feeney:

Okay. She's three years old, so to really just ask a little bit about the habit. What does she usually do, maybe this she only gives it to the child when they go out in the car. Even that, you'd wanna approach. But you would, I think by talking about the benefits of giving the fruit juice with a meal, giving it in a cup and that this might actually interfere with her health, might be the way to go with grandma because she would want her child, this child, to be healthy. And say we know that actually if she fills up on the juice, she's not gonna eat the things that she wants that are really good for her and that might be a good tactic.

Dr. Domino:

I think you're totally correct. I've seen so many folks, including my own mom, who tends to hold on to maybe the theories and beliefs of the past. And we now have really good data that shows using fruit juices can contribute to harm rather than benefit.

Susan Feeney:

Right.

Dr. Domino:

Well, thank you, Susan, this is a great topic. This is a great recommendation going forward, and it should be fairly easy for us to recommend. The real challenge will be helping parents and grandparents implement it.

Susan Feeney:

Right. Thank you.

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Dr. Domino:

Practice pointer: Eliminate fruit juice in the first year of life unless it's medically necessary, and thereafter, limit to no more than four ounces in the first six years of life, and eight ounces from age seven through 18. Join us next time when we discuss the influence of red meat on your health and mortality. Practice pointer: Eliminate fruit juice in the first year of life unless it's medically necessary, and thereafter, limit to no more than four ounces in the first six years of life, and eight ounces from age seven through 18. Join us next time when we discuss the influence of red meat on your health and mortality.