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Arsenic? Experts say real apple juice danger lies in calories

By Ryan Jaslow Topics News, Kids and family, Food and Drink

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(Credit: istockphoto)

waistlines and children's teeth.

Apple juice has few natural nutrients and is loaded in calories - in some cases, more than soda.

"It's like sugar water," said Judith Stern, a nutrition professor at the University of California, Davis. "I won't let my 3-year-old grandson drink apple juice."

Experts also say giving lots of apple juice trains them to like very sweet things and contributes to the obesity problem.

Though some apple juices are fortified with vitamins, nutritionists don't think that counters the caloric intake.

"If it wasn't healthy in the first place, adding vitamins doesn't make it into a health food," said Karen Ansel, spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says, "Fruit juice offers no nutritional benefit for infants younger than 6 months" and no benefits over whole fruit for older kids.

(CBS/AP) Everybody's talking apple juice these days, now that a new study found high levels of arsenic in some popular juice brands.

PICTURES: Consumer Reports spotlights arsenic, lead in 10 juices

But health experts are warning juice drinkers that apple juice can pose a different set of dangerous problems - because its loaded in calories.

Despite the FDA considering new limits on arsenic, nutrition experts say apple juice's real danger is to

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Children under 12 consume nearly 30 percent of all juice and juice drinks, according to the academy. Nationwide, apple juice is second only to orange in popularity. Americans gulp 267 ounces of apple juice on average each year, according to the Food Institute's Almanac of Juice Products and the trade group Juice Products Association. Lots more is consumed as an ingredient other food and drinks.

So what exactly is in apple juice?

Carbohydrates - mostly sugars - in a much higher concentration than in milk. Juice also contains a small amount of protein and minerals and lacks the fiber in whole fruit, the academy notes.

Drinking juice delivers a lot of calories quickly, so you might not realize how much you've consumed. That's why experts suggest if you're craving apple juice, why not grab an apple?

"Whole fruits are much better for you," said Dr. Frank Greer, a University of Wisconsin, Madison, professor and former head of the pediatrics academy's nutrition committee.

Are you or your family juice drinkers? Here are some tips from nutrition experts:

- Choose a juice fortified with calcium and vitamin D-3
- Give children only pasteurized juice, the only type safe from germs.
- Don't give juice to kids younger than 6 months, and never put it in bottles or sippy cups that allow babies and children to consume it throughout the day. That can cause tooth decay. For the same reason, don't give infants juice before bed.
- Limit juice to 4 to 6 ounces per day for children ages 1 to 6, and 8 to 12 ounces for those ages 7 to 18.
- Encourage kids to eat fruit.
- Don't be swayed by healthy-sounding claims on juice labels. "No sugar added" doesn't mean it isn't full of naturally occurring sugar. And "cholesterol-free" is silly - only animal products contain cholesterol.

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Consumer Reports spotlights arsenic, lead in 10 juices

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