

If you can't drink cow's milk, what is the best alternative?

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Fortified soy milk's nutritional profile nearly mimics that of low-fat milk and is the only nondairy alternative with the same 8 grams of complete protein per cup. Credit: Ingimage

Cow's milk is naturally rich in protein, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, riboflavin and vitamin B-12. It is also a valuable source of vitamins D

and A, thanks to fortification. But sometimes cow's milk is not an option due to allergy, intolerance or pure preference.

With the plethora of "milks" made from nuts, seeds, soy, coconut and grains, [milk](#)-free consumers have no lack of options; however, their protein and [vitamin](#)/mineral content can vary significantly.

To start, choose a variety fortified with calcium, vitamin D and, when possible, vitamin A and B vitamins. Unsweetened versions will avoid added sugars and calories.

Fortified soy milk's nutritional profile nearly mimics that of low-fat milk and is the only nondairy alternative with the same 8 grams of complete protein per cup. That makes it a great alternative for children ages 2 and up, who need enough protein and fat in their diets for growth and development. Consult a pediatrician or registered dietitian if soy is a problem for your child.

If you have an allergy or intolerance to soy or want something with fewer calories, the other fortified varieties may have something to offer. Almond milk is the lowest-calorie option, at 35 calories per cup.

Coconut milk is also low in calories, but high in saturated fat, which may raise bad cholesterol. Hemp milk is high in good, unsaturated fat. Rice milk is hypoallergenic. Just keep in mind that all of these have less than 2 grams of protein per cup, so be sure to make up that [protein](#) elsewhere in your diet.

Provided by Tufts University

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