

Toddler Formula vs. Fresh Milk â?? Which is Better? Hereâ??s Why We Choose Formula Milk

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How do you choose which milk to give?

For the longest time, many parents have switched over to fresh or UHT milk for their children after they turn one. The primary reasons cited are often:

- It is cheaper
- After a certain age, a childâ??s nutrition needs should be met by food rather than milk
- Many formula milk brands are high in sugars

For context, when Nate turned one, we also considered the switch, and started to expose him to both fresh milk and UHT milk across different brands to see which one he liked better.
Many of you have noticed that weâ??re still giving Nate formula milk (once in the morning and before bedtime) and have asked me why, so I thought Iâ??d document our thought process and reasons in this post for easier reference in the future.



Background Context

Nate isnâ??t a picky eater, so **he gets the majority of his nutrients from food**. However, as it is hard to get enough calcium from food alone, we continue to **supplement with milk** to ensure his calcium needs are met.

Our household does not have the habit of drinking milk. I do not consume it at all (not a fan of the taste), while my husband only adds milk to his coffee. As a result, we usually only buy fresh milk once a week, or sometimes not at all.

With that in mind, hereâ??s why some parents choose to switch, while others (like us) prefer to remain status quo:

1. Fresh or UHT milk is â??cheaperâ?• than formula milk.





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	(2 litres)	(1 litre)
Retails	$5.95	$2.10
Cost for 7 litres	$20.82	$14.70

If your child is drinking one of the more expensive milk brands, then I can definitely see why cost would be a primary factor. However, it doesnâ??t have to be, especially with brands like Nature One Dairy which cost up to 50% lesser.

I was very determined not to get stuck in a vicious cycle of buying expensive formula milk, so after our government started bringing in more low-cost formula milk brands in a bid to address the issue of rising infant milk prices, I did an in-depth comparison among different brands to confirm that we werenâ??t compromising on nutritional quality. *See my comparison with the other brands here.*

Choosing Nature One Dairy for my kids has been one of the best decisions we made, which has helped to significantly reduce our parenting expenses *(compared to when Nate was still on NAN in his first month, because that was the milk that he was exposed to in the hospital).* Not only is it similar or even higher in nutrients than many of the other brands, it is also one of the most affordable formula milk options on the market.

Although our toddler formula milk may cost slightly more than fresh milk, it provides other non-monetary benefits that we consider to be priceless. Read on to find out why.

2. A childâ??s needs can be met by food, rather than milk.

I definitely agree with this, but it is not easy to consume enough calcium with food alone, hence milk can be a good supplement. Toddlers need 700mg a day, which would require them to eat:

- 37 servings of spinach
- 40 servings of salmon
- 200g of tofu (4 packets)
- 6.5 servings of kids cheese sticks

As any parent will know, this is nearly impossible to achieve, which is why we continue to provide for our childrenâ??s calcium needs through milk as much as possible.

There are a few other considerations as well which could lead to your child having their other nutritional needs not being met:

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- there are days when your child has a poor appetite (e.g. when theyâ??re feeling unwell)
- if your child is a picky eater
- youâ??ve not diligently planned out your childâ??s food to ensure adequate nutrients and minerals are being accounted for in every meal

As a busy, modern parent, it is the last part that gives me the biggest headache. His meals now consist of mostly a staple (pasta / noodles / rice / porridge), a protein (fish / eggs / beef / pork / tofu) and vegetables (broccoli / eggplant / carrot / spinach / tomato / corn) and we generally vary between these ingredients at home on most days.

But he doesnâ??t always finish his meals, and doesnâ??t always have the appetite for fruits.

So as his mother, there is always that question at the back of my head wondering if heâ??s consuming enough. Has he eaten enough Vitamin A or zinc today? What about calcium? He keeps falling sick â?? am I feeding him enough Vitamin C?

You get the gist.

With Nate drinking 1 â?? 2 servings of formula milk a day, this takes away the mental stress of having to worry whether heâ??s getting enough nutrients.

And as any busy, modern parent will tell you, that helps a LOT.

3. Formula milk is high in sugars and can lead to obesity.

Iâ??m not sure if this reasoning came about because of certain brands that have added sucrose to their ingredients list, but one of my main considerations before we even decided on a milk brand for Nate when he was a child was that the milk should not be overly sweet.

Nature One Dairy does not add sucrose in their formula, which was why I chose it for Nate. So this reasoning wasnâ??t relevant in our case either.

As for obesity, Nate has been and still is at the 25th percentile of his cohort, and currently weighs 12kg for a 3-year-old. Heâ??s lighter and smaller-sized than many of his peers, and even lighter than of his younger female cousins and friends.

If you choose the right brand, sugar shouldnâ??t be a concern. Nate gets the same amount of sugars (lactose) when he drinks fresh vs. Nature One Dairy formula milk, and he hasnâ??t gotten overweight from formula milk.

4. Formula milk has a longer shelf life.

The other mental burden of modern parenting is having to ensure that you restock your milk supplies regularly within the week, as fresh milk can only last for a few days. UHT milk lasts a little longer, but still has a much shorter shelf life compared to formula milk powder.

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If your household has the habit of already drinking milk on a regular basis, then this shouldnâ??t be a problem. However, in my household, neither my husband nor I consume much milk (my husband only drinks milk in his coffee, and even then, he doesnâ??t have his coffee every day and seldom finishes the packet before it expires).

Staying on formula milk removes the need for me to consciously repurchase fresh milk every few days. Instead, I can simply stock up and not have to worry about running out at the last minute.

5. It is easier to prepare warm formula milk.

Another key reason why weâ??re happy to stay with formula milk for now is because it is **easier (and faster) to prepare a warm bottle of formula** than to warm up fresh milk (which we store in the refrigerator) or UHT milk.

I can literally prepare Nateâ??s milk in 30 seconds. But if we were to do the same for other milk types, we will need to wait several minutes for the milk to warm up in the hot bath.

What if I prefer to wean my child off formula milk?

Parenting is already hard enough, so let me emphasize that **whatever your choice, you know what is best for your child and/or your family.**

Some parents believe that fresh milk is better, while others (like me) prefer to continue keeping our children on formula milk until they prefer to stop.

And if you want â??realâ?• milk i.e. fresh cow milk, rather than one that is made from milk substances, then this graphic by FoodSavvy.sg might help you decide which one to get.

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Which Pasteurised 'Fresh' Milk is Real Milk?

Made with Fresh Cow's Milk



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Made From Mixture of Milk Substances & Cow's Milk



Solely Made From Milk Substances



Footnotes
Based on declaration of ingredients on product labels.
Fresh cow's milk includes skimmed and low fat milk in some products.
Milk substances may include and are not restricted to milk solids, milk fats, milk powder & whey protein.
Photo credit: https://www.fairprice.com.sg

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Is fresh milk or UHT milk better?

UHT milk refers to milk that has been heated to ultra-high temperatures of 135-145Â°C and kept for 2-4 seconds for sterilization.

As compared to fresh milk, UHT milk has slightly less nutrients as some of the vitamins are degraded during the heating process. But **if you are giving your child milk mainly for calcium, then there is hardly any difference between UHT and fresh milk.**

Of course, if one day Nate tells me that he doesnâ??t want his formula milk anymore, then I will wean him off it.

For me, I weaned off milk entirely when I was in kindergarten and suddenly decided that I no longer liked the taste. My parents respected my decision and from then on, I was no longer made to drink milk. On the other hand, my husband didnâ??t stop until he was in late primary school.

Weâ??ve already exposed him to all 3 types â?? fresh milk, UHT milk and formula milk â?? but he still asks for his Nature One Dairy milk before bed every single morning and night. The only times heâ??ll take fresh or UHT milk would be when heâ??s having it with his breakfast cereal, or as an afternoon snack (which is not frequent).

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So thatâ??s why weâ??ll be sticking with formula milk for now.

It not only saves us money, plenty of time and mental load, but more importantly, my child likes it.

And as a mom, whatever makes my son happy will be my ultimate choice.

Disclosure: This post is written in collaboration with Nature One Dairy, after they found out that we're still sticking with formula milk for our toddler.

Important Message from Nature One Dairy:

Toddler milk is not required, but is **recommended as a supplement** because it has a complete profile of vitamins and minerals. Formula is a fortified milk, which is why it can be more expensive than some brands of fresh milk, but not always so. As it helps to consolidate other nutrients in one formula, formula can be a good choice for parents who prefer to have the reassurance that their childâ??s daily nutritional needs are always being met, regardless of your childâ??s dietary preference for solids.

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