**Juice - too much of a good thing**

Preschoolers who drink too much juice are more likely to be too short, and too heavy, for their age according to research. As a result, nutrition experts are advising parents and child care givers to limit juice to 3/4 cup per day. “Unfortunately, when it comes to juice - there’s such a thing as too much” says Dr. Sharon Robinson, Nutrition Specialist with Texas Cooperative Extension.

While fruit and juice are part of a healthful eating plan, they should not be substituted for milk and other healthful foods. As always, a healthy eating plan is based on variety, balance and moderation.

When shopping for fruit juice, look for ‘100% juice’ on the packaging. Powdered fruit-ades and fruit flavored sodas are no substitute for the nutrition that is in 100% fruit juice. “In fact,” says Dr. Robinson, “sweet drinks not only add calories to the diet but they can spoil children’s appetite for the foods they need to grow, develop, and stay healthy.” Children who consume more calories than needed are more apt to be heavy for their age.

How much fruit and juice should you offer your preschooler? Most young children need about 1 to 2 cups from the MyPyramid Fruit Group each day. To determine how much food you should serve your child based on your child’s age, gender and physical activity level visit [http://www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov).

The next time you take your child to the doctor, ask if your child’s height and weight is right for his or her age. Remember, never place a child on a weight loss diet unless instructed by a doctor. Instead, serve foods based on MyPyramid during family mealtimes and enjoy regular family activity.

Texas Cooperative Extension offers nutrition education events in your area. To learn more, contact you local Family and Consumer Science County Extension Agent.