

Looking at Claims Made about Soy and Other Plant Milks

This information provided by [Switch4Good](#), an affiliate organization.



CLAIM: Kids should have water and real food instead of milk, plant-based or otherwise.

TRUTH: We agree that some folks have the availability and the means to feed their children water *and* nutrient dense foods, but sadly this is not a shared experience for many families. The U.S. public school breakfast and lunch program feeds 31 million children per day at no cost to the families. These children get breakfast and lunch at school but MANY of them may not get dinner when they go home at night, and so these children do need a nutrient dense drink, to replace the cow's milk, that gives them a balanced macronutrient profile. Many of us with privilege don't need a one size fits all drink, as we have access to fresh fruits, veggies, grains, legumes etc., but we are the minority in this reality. We must consider the nutritional needs of all, not just some, and provide a healthy alternative to cow's milk for our nation's children who rely on government support to nourish themselves.

CLAIM: We should offer kids all of the plant milk options. So, why soy milk in schools?

TRUTH: Soy milk was recognized as nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk per the release of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. NO other plant milk was given this nutritional equivalency, and so when we speak of adding soy milk into the school lunch program as an alternative to cow's milk, we have the backing of our government's very own agency who sets the guidelines for proper nutrition for our nation. This is extremely important in terms of the actual school cafeteria implementation of providing an alternative milk to children and it is our best chance at ensuring children are provided the opportunity to build a healthy and strong foundation.

In addition, many folks of privilege have the option and the opportunity to drink a variety of different plant milks during a day, week or month, depending on what their desire and/or recipe calls for. But this isn't the case for over 30 million children of our school lunch program. They need a replacement for cow's milk that has a balanced macronutrient profile, as the nutrition they receive at school, may be the only nutrition they get during any given day.

We will not be successful with any of the nut milks being allowed in public schools because of the issue of nut allergies, so that removes the possibilities for almond milk, cashew milk, pistachio milk, and hazelnut milk. Although oat milk is delicious, it does not have any protein, so it is not a viable option either. Coconut milk has no protein and is over 30% fat, so it is not a healthy alternative to cow's milk either. Hemp milk, pea milk and flaxseed milk are popular and yummy, however their cost of goods is far too expensive, and we do not expect the government to lean into offering these pricey milks for free.

CLAIM: Lectins are bad, and soybeans have lectins.

TRUTH: While some have speculated dietary lectins are harmful, just as many have suggested that lectins may actually be protective against the development of cancer. In fact, recent studies have explored lectins for their anti-cancer properties for both colon, prostate and breast cancer and as a potential explanation for the beneficial impact of plant-based diets. A recent [meta-analysis](#) analyzing nearly 14 large-scale studies found that diets rich in legumes are beneficial for reducing colon cancer, with lectin proposed as a key component.

Regardless, we understand there may remain some concerns regarding lectin content, particularly in soy-based products. Adverse effects typically associated with lectin toxicity don't appear in the hundreds of published clinical trials involving a range of soy products. The most practical way to minimize lectin activity often consists of aqueous heat treatment. In short, fully soaking the seeds and then heating them in water of around 100°C completely eliminates lectin activity in [fully hydrated soy beans](#), [kidney beans](#), fava beans, and others. A more recent [study](#) found that soaking and cooking soybeans destroyed more than 99.6% of the lectin content. To create soy milk, soy beans are crushed, heated, and boiled at very high temperatures for aseptic and quality purposes ([Link attached here for the process](#)). In simple terms, don't eat raw beans (which no one does). Eat cooked ones.