

Water for infants and young children

Water is the best drink for children over one year of age. Water is essential to keep the body healthy and alive. It helps transport nutrients, maintains blood volume, regulates temperature and removes waste products. Tap water is the best water for children, as it is safe and may also contain fluoride to protect teeth.

For children under one year of age, breast milk is the best fluid. If a baby is not breast fed then formula should be used until they reach one year of age. Babies get enough water in their milk, but once they have started solids it is appropriate to offer water as well, especially in hot weather. After 6 months of age babies can have water from a cup.

Water is a much better choice than fruit juice, soft drinks and cordial. Fruit juice, soft drinks and cordial contain lots of sugar and few vitamins and minerals. The sugar content can damage teeth and lead to extra weight gain.

How much water a child needs to drink will vary based on the weather, what they are doing, foods they eat and their age and weight. If the weather is warmer, your child is very active, or they have been unwell they will need to drink more water. Generally if children are able to get water easily, whenever they want to, they will drink enough to keep their body healthy.

Tips for getting your child to drink water

- Make it readily available – leave a jug of water or their own drink bottle on the table or kitchen bench.
- Keep chilled tap water in the fridge.
- Add some slices of oranges or lemons to the water.
- Try putting ice blocks in the water – there are some really interesting shapes available. You could add pieces of frozen fruit.
- Serve water with meals and snacks.
- Pack bottles of water when you go out.
- Drink water yourself and let your child see you enjoying water.
- Avoid keeping soft drinks and cordial in the house; if it is not available, your child is less likely to want it.

