

Drinks for babies and toddlers



Drinks for babies (birth to 12 months)

- Breast milk supplies all the fluid and nutrients babies require for the first six months, so other drinks and foods are not needed.
- Breast milk or infant formula should be the main food and drink.
- Fruit juices are not recommended for children under 6 months, and are not necessary for older children.
- Fruit juices (even 100% juice) have a lot of sugar in them. Too much fruit juice can increase the risk of tooth decay and your child becoming overweight. Juice also fills children up and stops them eating nutritious foods like whole fruit and vegetables.
- Cow's milk, herbal teas, soft drinks and other beverages are not recommended.
- Boil all water that is fed to your baby.



Drinks for children

Plain cool water is the best drink for children. Encourage children to drink water and some plain milk as their regular drinks. To make water more appealing:

- buy a special novelty water bottle for your child.
- add novelty shaped ice cubes or ice with frozen fruit inside.
- add fruit slices/wedges for flavour.
- serve it cold from the fridge in a special glass.
- show that adults really like drinking water too.

Milk contains natural sugars but also contains protein, calcium and other important nutrients. Reduced fat milks are not suitable in the first two years of life. Milk is an important part of a child's diet, but it should not replace other good foods needed like fruits, vegetables, cheese, yoghurt, breads, cereals, rice, pasta, meat, chicken and fish.



Sugar content of common drinks

The following table lists the approximate amount of sugar found in common drinks.

Type of drink	Amount of drink (common size)	Sugar content per can/pack (1 teaspoon = 5 grams)
Soft drink	375ml	8-9 tsp
Fruit juice drink (25% juice)	250ml	5 tsp
100% pure fruit juice	250ml	5 tsp
100% pure vegetable juice	250ml	2-3 tsp
Sports drink	250ml	3-5 tsp
Flavoured milk	250ml	5-6 tsp
Plain milk	250ml	2-3 tsp
Water	600ml	0 tsp

Note: Diet soft drinks contain no sugar but are acidic and can erode tooth enamel.

Drinks containing Vitamin C

- Parents often give children fruit juice to increase their intake of Vitamin C. Most fruit juices are high in Vitamin C but they lack the important fibre found in whole fruit, and are very high in natural sugars and fruit acids. If children are used to drinking fruit juice, try to reduce the amount they drink gradually by substituting with water. Whole fruits and vegetables provide Vitamin C with much less sugar and much more fibre.
- Vitamin C syrups have a very high sugar content and are not recommended.
- Breast and infant formula fed babies do not need extra Vitamin C in the form of juices or syrups.

How to drink less sugar

- Water is the cheapest and best thirst quencher. Encourage water rather than sweetened drinks and fruit juices.
- Plain milk is a good source of calcium and other nutrients.
- Soft drinks, cordials and fruit drinks provide little or no nutritional value and are high in kilojoules because of the sugar content. They should only be consumed occasionally.
- Sports drinks, soft drinks and fruit juices are also acidic which can erode tooth enamel.



Queensland Health, reprinted 2008. Adapted from *When You Need a Drink*.
Health Department of Western Australia. June 1994.