

HEALTHY DRINKS. HEALTHY KIDS.

Healthy Beverage Consumption in Early Childhood

Recommendations from Key National Health
and Nutrition Organizations



Healthy Drinks, Healthy Kids

Research shows that what children drink – from birth through age 5 – can have a big impact on their health. That’s why some of the nation’s leading experts on health and nutrition developed recommendations to help parents and caregivers choose what’s best for kids. The full recommendations can be found at HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org. This brief provides more details about [water](#).

A deeper dive on water

Water is essential for life and should be the go-to drink to quench children’s thirst. The daily amount that children need can change based on the weather, how active they are, and the amount of fluids they get from other drinks as well as food. (For example, foods like applesauce, soup, and oatmeal provide more water than others). That’s why the range of recommended water amounts is so big for one- to five- year-olds.

So, how much water is good for kids?



Is there such a thing as drinking too much water?

There is no single upper limit for how much water a person should drink in a given day, because water needs can vary from day to day. While rare, there may be special cases that could put a person at risk for drinking too much water. For example, water intoxication can occur in infants if too much water is used to prepare infant formula or if water is substituted for breast milk or infant formula.

Does it matter where my water comes from?

Knowing where your drinking water comes from, how it’s been treated, and if it’s safe to drink is important. Drinking water can come from a variety of sources, including public water systems, private wells, or bottled water. Water from public water systems and private wells is commonly referred to as “tap water.” [Well water](#) should be tested to make sure it’s safe to drink. Local governments typically provide information about groundwater conditions and options for water safety and quality testing.

Is there fluoride in all water?

Drinking fluoridated water is one of the best ways to reduce a child’s chances of having cavities. Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that helps prevent cavities. Fluoridation refers to how much fluoride is added to drinking water. The recommended level of fluoride in drinking water is 0.7 parts per million. Information from your local water provider can help you find out if your home’s drinking water is fluoridated, and to what level. If your water isn’t fluoridated, talk to your dentist about other ways to get enough fluoride, as this is important for dental health.

The fluoride content of [bottled water](#) varies a lot. Most bottled waters don’t have ideal levels of fluoride, and some don’t have any at all.

Thirsty for more? Visit HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org

What about other kinds of water?

Carbonated Water (i.e. seltzer or sparkling water)

Plain, fluoridated water is best, but fizzy waters that do not have added sugars or low-calorie sweeteners (such as stevia, sucralose, aspartame, or acesulfame potassium) are a better choice than sweetened drinks if your child will not accept plain water at first.

The carbonation that causes the bubbles in these drinks has acids that may weaken teeth's hard outer shells, but it's not clear how much a person would have to drink to see these negative effects. As long as these drinks are not a child's main source of hydration, there's likely little need to worry.

Coconut Water

Coconut water is a clear liquid in the center of young, green coconuts and can be considered a type of 100% juice. Plain, unsweetened coconut water is relatively low in calories and sugar and is a source of the essential mineral potassium. It is not equivalent to plain water and should be limited. Beware of coconut juice, which often has added sugars and should be avoided for children ages five and under. For more information about juice recommendations, visit HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org.

Pro-tips: Helping little ones like plain water

- It's best to start with plain water before introducing sweeter drinks. This helps kids develop healthy habits – getting used to being served plain water and shaping their taste preferences so they enjoy its taste.
- If your child won't accept plain water, try adding pieces of fresh fruit to improve the taste. Let your child pick his or her favorite fruit! You can also add a silly straw to a special cup or water bottle that your child likes. Reserve this cup for plain water only. It's amazing how something so simple can be such a big motivator for young kids!
- Parent modeling of healthy behaviors can have a big impact on young children's habits. When our little ones see adults and older kids drinking plain water, it will likely have an impact on their choices, too!

Remember, plain water is the best option to quench kids' thirst from ages one through five!

Thirsty for more?

Visit HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org to find more information on other drinks such as:

- Milk
- Juice
- Plant-Based, Non-Dairy Milk
- Toddler Milk
- Sugar-Sweetened Beverages
- Low-Calorie Sweetened Beverages

Healthy
Eating
Research

These recommendations were developed by experts at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), and the American Heart Association (AHA) under the leadership of Healthy Eating Research (HER) with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.