

Healthy Drinks for Young Children



Healthy drinks provide nutrition and fluids that growing children need, while some drinks can lead to childhood obesity, dental decay and anemia. Healthy habits for drinking start when children are very young.



Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the normal way to feed your baby. Health experts recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months (only feed from the breast or give expressed milk in a bottle). After starting solid foods, continue breastfeeding while your baby is learning about new foods, until your baby is 12 months old. You can breastfeed for as long as you and your baby wish after that.



Milk

At 12 months your baby can start to drink whole milk from a cup with your help. Avoid sippy cups or use them only at mealtime since frequent sipping can lead to dental decay. At age 2, switch from whole milk to 1% or non-fat milk. A toddler should have about 16-24 ounces of milk per day. Too much milk can spoil your child's appetite for other nutritious foods.



Water

Once your baby is 6 months old, offer drinking water for thirst between meals. Make sure water is readily available to offer when your child is thirsty. Most counties add fluoride to tap water to prevent dental decay. Ask your health care provider about fluoride in your tap water.



Limit Juice and Avoid Sweetened Drinks

Sugary drinks, sweetened juice and soda can lead to tooth decay and obesity. After your child reaches 6 months, limit juice to one 4–6 ounce serving of 100% fruit juice per day at mealtime. Avoid giving sweetened drinks to your child. Do not put juice, soda or sugary drinks in a bottle or let your child carry around juice to sip between meals.