

For children aged 1-4

Healthy Hydration

About 6-8 cups or beakers a day are recommended

The amount of fluid children need depends on many factors but be sure to offer children drinks frequently; they may not recognise when they are thirsty.

Water

Have regularly



Is an excellent choice throughout the day because it hydrates without providing extra energy (calories) or harming teeth.

Milk

Milk and water are good choices for young children



Is a useful source of nutrients, especially protein, iodine and calcium. Children under 2 years should have whole milk. Those eating well and having a healthy, balanced diet can drink semi-skimmed milk after 2 years. Skimmed or 1% fat milks are not suitable as main drinks for children under 5.

Unsweetened, calcium-fortified dairy alternatives (e.g. oat, soya or almond drinks), ideally also fortified with other minerals (e.g. iodine) and vitamins, can be offered from 1 year of age as part of a healthy, balanced diet, with the exception of rice milk, which is not suitable for children under 5.

Fruit and vegetable juices and smoothies

Dilute with water



Can provide some vitamins and minerals. However, they also contain sugars and can be acidic, which is harmful to teeth. If given, keep them to meal times and dilute.

Sugar-free drinks

Not recommended



Can hydrate without adding sugars, but these may contain acids that can be harmful to teeth and some of these drinks also contain caffeine.

Sugary drinks

Avoid



Are best avoided as they provide sugars, but few other nutrients. Too much sugar can lead to weight gain and tooth decay. These drinks can also fill young children up and reduce their appetite at mealtimes.

Tea and coffee

Not suitable



Are not suitable for young children (especially when sweetened) as they contain caffeine and can reduce the amount of iron absorbed from food especially if they're given with meals.

Children aged 1-2 years will be getting most of the nutrients they need from solid foods but breastfeeding can continue alongside this. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends breastfeeding alongside appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond.