

Fluid Facts for Kids

Although plain drinking water is a clear choice for proper hydration, it's not the only choice. The water in other beverages such as milk, juice, sports drinks and soft drinks—and even in foods, such as yogurt and ice cream and caffeinated beverages like coffee and tea—contribute to the body's water needs the same way plain water does.

Your children's daily water needs will vary depending on their age, gender, physical activity level, the temperature outside, and their health, including whether they have a temperature on a given day. Generally, healthy kids who aren't involved in rigorous physical activity or sports get enough water by drinking when they're thirsty and eating a balanced diet.

Check out the [nutrition chart](#) below for guidelines on adequate daily water intake for kids from beverages and foods. Then, tap into the tips below to help your kids drink up for good health.

- **Keep fluids flowing.** Offer smaller amounts of beverages throughout the day, rather than large amounts at one time. This keeps kids hydrated,

but not so full from fluids that they're not hungry at mealtime. Be mindful of the types of beverages you choose. Beverages with added sugars and calories, but few other nutrients, should be occasional choices.

- **Make fluids fun.** For littler kids, serve beverages in colorful glasses and use crazy-shaped loopy straws.
- **Let kids pick their own water bottle.** They'll be more excited to carry beverages to school, sports and other activities. *Tip:* To keep beverages chilled, freeze half the fluid in the bottle overnight and then top off the bottle in the morning.
- **Use caution when it's hot outside, especially for active kids.** In high temperatures, kids don't sweat as much as adults do, so it's harder for them to cool off. This makes them more at risk for dehydration and heat exhaustion. When it's hot out and kids are playing sports—or even just actively playing—head off problems by making sure they drink fluids before, during and after activity. As a guideline, encourage at least 4 ounces of fluid every 15-20 minutes, or whenever there's a break or time-out. *Tip:* One ounce equals about one "gulp."

- **Use caution when it's cold, too.** Kids who play winter sports or play actively outside in cold, dry environments may sweat more too, especially when wearing lots of layers or protective gear. So, follow the same fluid guidelines as for hot weather.
- **Slip in watery foods.** Serve soups and juicy fruits and veggies like cherry tomatoes, cucumber slices, lettuce, watermelon, oranges, grapes, peaches and strawberries. Can also add lemon, lime or orange slices to water to flavor them naturally.

(Source: DRI Report, 2004)

Guidelines for Adequate Daily Water Intake for Kids

The chart below shows approximately how much water kids of different ages and genders need daily for proper hydration. Water can come from beverages such as drinking water, milk and juice, and from foods. Physically active kids need more water, especially in higher temperatures.

Age Group	Total Water (approx. cups)	Water from Beverages (approx. cups)	Water from Foods (approx. cups)
Children 1 - 3	5 ½	4	1 ½
Children 4 - 8	7	5	2
Girls 9 - 13	9	7	2
Boys 9 - 13	10	8	2
Girls 14 - 18	10	8	2
Boys 14 - 18	14	11	3