Drinks for babies and young children

CHILDSMILE



NHS SCOTLAND

Healthier Scotland
Scottish Government

Breast milk is the best drink for your baby

Breast-fed babies do not require any other drinks in their first 6 months. Breast milk or infant formula should be the main drink during the first year of life.

Continue with breast milk or infant formula as a main drink when you wean your baby. If babies need a drink in addition to milk, they should be given cooled boiled tap water (up to 6 months of age).

Always take extra care when making up infant formula and follow the manufacturer's guidelines. Current advice from the Food Standards Agency is to make up one bottle of instant formula at a time. Your health visitor can advise you on this.

You can also use bottled water, but only if it has a sodium content (sometimes listed as Na) of less than 200 mg per litre. Bottled water also needs to be boiled before you prepare the feed.



Soya-based formula contain sugars, which can cause tooth decay. Soya-based formula and follow-on milks should be given only if advised by your doctor or health visitor.

Choosing drinks without sugar for your baby will:

- **set healthy habits for life**
- **help prevent decay in first teeth**
- **improve your baby's overall health and nutrition**
- **keep your baby's smile looking good**



Free-flow cups: a step forward for your baby

- Introduce a free-flow cup at 6 months.
- Free-flow cups allow the water to drip out when the cup is turned upside down. These are given out free of charge by your health visitor as part of the Childsmile programme.
- Non-spill (valve) cups encourage your baby to suck rather than sip and should be avoided. The sucking motion can indirectly lead to speech problems.
- Drinks taken from a bottle are more likely to lead to dental problems because the fluid tends to stay in the mouth longer than when sipping from a cup.
- Aim to have your baby drinking only from a cup (and no longer using bottles) by their first birthday.





- Never give sugary drinks in bottles or valve cups as this can cause very rapid tooth decay.
- Never give your baby sugary drinks last thing at night or during the night if they wake up. Other danger times for sugary drinks are between meals, in the buggy or car seat, or as a comforter.
- Never leave your child alone with a cup or bottle, either during the day or when they are in bed, as they may choke.



Water is the best drink between meals for thirsty babies and toddlers.



Advice on other drinks



Water

After 6 months of age, water is the best drink to quench thirst between meals. Use tap (rather than bottled) water. Only give cooled boiled tap water to babies under 6 months of age when required. Ask your health visitor for advice.



Cow's milk

From 12 months you can start to give full-fat cow's milk as a main drink. Milk contains calcium, which is important for strong bones. Semi-skimmed milk is suitable for young children over the age of 2, as long as they are eating a varied diet.

Diluted fresh fruit juice
(one part juice to one part water, or more water as necessary)



This can be given from the age of 6 months, at mealtimes only. Diluted fresh fruit juice is a good source of vitamin C and is best given with breakfast or a main meal to help with the absorption of iron. Never give this drink between meals as fresh fruit juices are acidic and can wear away your baby's teeth. Remember – never give juice in a feeding bottle.

Drinks not recommended

✗ Baby drinks

Most (even those labelled 'organic' or 'healthy') contain sugar, which can cause tooth decay.

✗ Flavoured waters

Most flavoured waters contain artificial sweeteners and therefore should not be given to babies and toddlers. Many of these drinks also contain sugar which can cause tooth decay. These drinks are also acidic and can wear away your baby's teeth.

✗ Flavoured milk, milk shakes and milk-based smoothies

These contain sugars and can cause tooth decay. Never give these drinks between meals or last thing at night.

✗ Diluting squash and fizzy drinks

These contain sugars and artificial sweeteners. It is not recommended that you give these drinks to babies or toddlers. If diluting squashes are given, remember to serve well diluted and keep to mealtimes only.

✗ Tea, herbal tea and coffee (even unsweetened)

These are not suitable drinks for babies or young children. They affect the way your child absorbs iron from his or her food.

Plain milk and tap water are the safest drinks for teeth



Read the labels – check for sugars!

Ingredients
Water, Glucose, Fructose Syrup (from wheat and maize, Blackcurrant Juice from Concentrate (6%), Sugar, Vitamin C, Citric Acid.

Nutrition Information

Typical Values	Per 100 g
Energy	219 kJ/51 calories
Protein	Trace
Carbohydrate	12.6 g
of which sugars	**12.1 g**
Fat	Nil
of which saturates	Nil
Fibre	Nil
Sodium	Trace

Vitamin C 24mg (40% RDA). Each 288ml serving provides 115% RDA of vitamin C.

Check the label and watch out for hidden sugars. The main ones to look out for are: **glucose, glucose syrup, fructose, concentrated fruit juice, sucrose, dextrose, honey, inverted sugar, maltose, hydrolysed starches**. If you see these on the label then try to avoid these drinks as they can cause tooth decay.

Many food products labelled 'healthy', 'low sugar', 'no added sugar' or 'herbal' may still contain sugar.

For more information, ask your health visitor or visit **www.child-smile.org**

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