

Water - a good choice throughout the day because it hydrates without providing extra energy (calories/kilojoules) or risking harm to teeth

Milk is a useful source of nutrients, especially protein, B vitamins and calcium. Most children should drink reduced-fat milks. Unsweetened, calcium fortified dairy alternatives can also be included. Milky drinks containing added sugars such as milkshakes, hot chocolate and malted drinks should only be drunk occasionally.

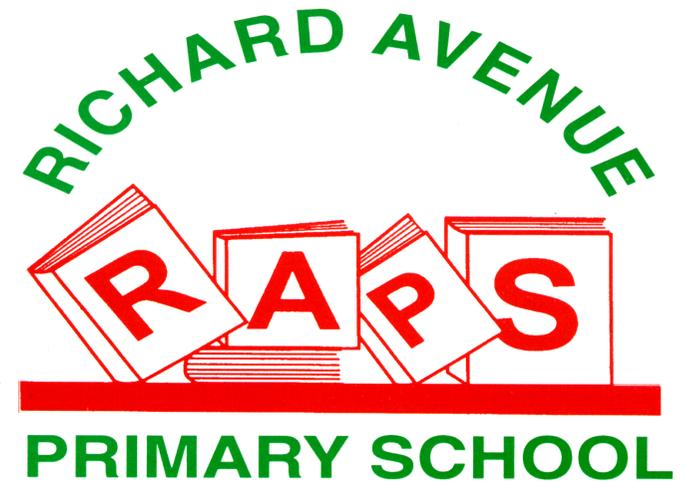
Fruit and vegetable juices and smoothies provide some vitamins and minerals and smoothies can contain fibre. However, they also contain free sugars and can be acidic so it's recommended to limit them to one small glass (150ml) a day and to keep them to mealtimes. 150ml counts as a maximum of 1 portion of 5 A DAY. They can be diluted with water to reduce acidity and sugars content.

Sugar-free drinks hydrate without adding extra sugars but it's a good idea for most drinks to be milk or water to avoid getting a taste for sweet drinks. Fizzy drinks can contain acids that can erode the outer surface of the tooth. Be aware that some of these drinks contain caffeine.

Tea and coffee. Caffeine is naturally present in tea and coffee. Small amounts are harmless but high intakes should be avoided, especially for young children. It's best for children to drink decaffeinated tea and coffee with reduced fat milks and no added sugar.

Sugary drinks are best avoided as they provide sugars and few nutrients. Fizzy drinks can contain acids that can erode the outer surface of the tooth. Be aware that some of these drinks contain caffeine.

Sports and energy drinks can be high in sugars and energy drinks may contain high levels of caffeine or other stimulants. These drinks are not suitable for young children.



A guide to the importance of water for children

Based on information from



Water

Why water is important Our bodies and brains are mainly made up of water. Children often do not drink enough, especially when they are at school. Children are less likely to feel thirsty than adults and can easily become dehydrated without realising. To be dehydrated means that you do not have enough water in your body for it to work properly!

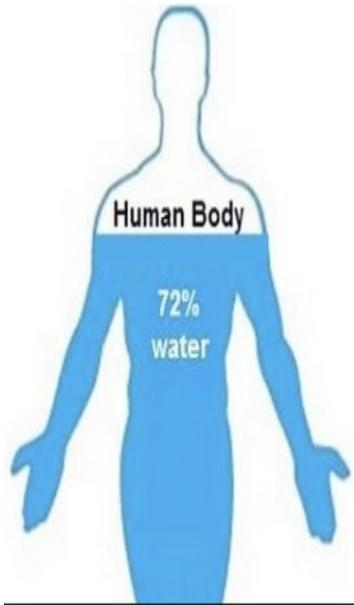
Infants and young children have a higher proportion of body water than adults. They are also less heat tolerant and may be more likely to get dehydrated, especially when being physically active and in hot climates. Encouraging children to drink fluids regularly is really important as children may not remember to have a drink by themselves.

Teachers, parents/guardians and care providers need to make sure that there are drinks available for children regularly through the day and that children are encouraged to drink plenty of fluids.

Practical tips to keep children hydrated

- Ensure children have a drink before school i.e. with breakfast, and before and during playtime.
- Parents, teachers and guardians should offer drinks regularly, especially in hot environments.
- Remember that many foods have a high water content and can also contribute to fluid intake. i.e. fruit, vegetables, yogurt.

Always pack a water bottle in a school bag or lunchbox for children heading off to school/outings/other activities.



How much do children need?

The amount of fluid a child needs depends on many factors including their age, their gender, the weather and how much physical activity they do, but generally they should aim to drink about 6-8 glasses of fluid per day (on top of the water provided by food in their diet). Younger children need relatively smaller drinks (e.g. 120–150 ml serving) and older children need larger drinks (e.g. 250–300 ml serving).

What are the most appropriate drinks for children?

When choosing drinks for children, it is important to be aware that although they all provide water, and some also contain essential vitamins and minerals, they may also provide sugars and therefore energy (calories/kilojoules). Energy in drinks contributes to our daily energy intake in the same way as food. Getting too much energy from drinks over time could cause weight gain.

In addition, drinking sugar-sweetened drinks too often can potentially lead to tooth decay, especially if consumed frequently between meals or if teeth are not brushed regularly with fluoride toothpaste. Dental guidelines recommend consuming sugar-containing food and drinks on no more than four occasions per day.

It is also important to be aware that some drinks are acidic (e.g. fruit juice, squash and some carbonated drinks) and that this may cause dental erosion (damage to tooth enamel) if they are drunk often. Some drinks such as tea, coffee and some soft drinks may also contain caffeine which is a mild stimulant. Too much caffeine can make children irritable and keep them awake at night if consumed in the evening, so it is advisable not to give children caffeine-containing drinks at this time.

Benefits of drinking water

Improves Concentration

Helps improve fitness levels

Helps maintain a healthy weight

Helps reduce toileting problems

Lowers the risk of future health problems!