

Offering Water to My Baby



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Many parents are unsure about when, how and how much water to offer young babies, especially once they begin the move to solid foods.

Generally, babies don't need any water before they begin solids foods at around 6 months of age. Before this time most of the fluid that a baby will get will be in the form of breast or **formula milk.** **However, as breast milk adapts to your baby's daily needs and formula doesn't, formula fed babies may need a little extra water in very hot weather.**

Before 6 months of age, it is recommended that water is sterilised by being boiled and then allowed to cool before being offered to baby. However, after 6 months the Department of Health suggests there is no need to boil water before offering it to babies and that tap water is acceptable. Bottled **water isn't recommended for babies** however, as it often has higher levels of minerals and sodium than tap water and is not suitable for very young children.

From around 6 months of age, babies start to eat a more varied diet and may gradually reduce the amount of milk they consume. At the same time, they are likely to become more active and therefore may need a little more in the way of fluids.

During the introduction of solid food, **it's a good idea at mealtime to offer a little water** in an open or free **flowing cup.** **You don't need to offer much at this stage, but** offering some can help ensure babies stay hydrated and, importantly, help them learn to take drinks from a cup. The Department of Health recommends all children stop the use of a bottle or teat by around 12 months of age, so introducing a cup at the weaning stage will help baby make this transition. As your baby gets older and is reducing their milk intake, you can gradually offer more water at each mealtime and even during other times of the day.

The best way to ensure your baby is hydrated is to check they are producing plenty wet nappies. If your baby reduces the number of wet nappies, has particularly strong urine or seems very tired and lethargic, it may be worthwhile ensuring they are getting plenty of fluid from their usual milk or additional water. During hot weather **and if your baby is particularly active they may also need extra water.** **If you're** concerned that your baby may be dehydrated make sure you check with your Health Visitor or GP.

Top Tips

- **Breastfed babies aren't likely to need water much before 6 months of age.** Formula fed babies may need a little extra fluid in very warm weather
- Boil then cool tap water before offering it to babies under 6 months (not necessary post 6 months of age)
- Offer a little water at mealtimes during the introduction of solids to help baby get used to drinking from an open cup
- Make sure all drinks are offered from an open or free flowing cup by around 12 months of age
- Check your baby is producing plenty of wet nappies to make sure they are staying hydrated and visit your GP if you have any concerns.

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