

Tips for Providers: Drinking Water

Water is very important for everyone's health. Everyone needs to drink plenty of water daily. Start the habit of drinking water early! Begin to introduce water to infants around six months. Water should not replace breast milk or formula. Preschoolers and toddlers should have water available all day. Use the tips below to get children to drink more water.



1 Offer Water Often.

Keep cold water handy and offer water to the children throughout the day. This is a requirement in CACFP centers and homes. You can make it fun for the children by writing down the number of cups that everyone drinks or encouraging children to use a special cup only for water drinking.

2 Limit Other Drinks.

Milk or water is the best drink choice. However, children only need around two cups of milk total per day. 100 percent fruit juice is fine once or twice a week served in a small half cup glass. Avoid serving soda, fruit drinks, punch, or other sweetened drinks to the children. Sweet drinks can start tooth decay in children even before they have teeth!

3 Try Natural Flavors.

To help children get used to drinking water, add fruit. Cut up orange, lemon, or lime slices and add to the water. These may increase the children's interest in water.

4 Protect Teeth.

Fluoride is a mineral in most tap water and protects teeth from decay. Drinking fluoridated water is important to dental health. Check your local community water service to see if there is fluoride in your water. If there is not fluoride in your water, consult your healthcare provider for guidance.

5 Use Tap Water.

Bottled water can be helpful when you are on the go, but bottled water does not always have fluoride. Check the label. Bottled water is not any safer than tap water. Tap water is cheaper!

6 Don't Buy Other Drinks!

If the center or home has only milk and water available, the children will have to drink milk or water. They cannot beg for a drink that is not in the center or home! It is healthier for you too!

7 Make it Fun.

Use fun straws only when the children drink water. Use special paper cups that are only for drinking water. After a long play session, bring water to the children and call it a superhero drink.



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