

Fluid Facts for Babies and Young Children

Human milk helps protect children against infections and other illnesses and has value even in small amounts.

0 to 9 Months	9 to 12 Months	1 to 2 Years	2 to 6 Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer human milk or iron-fortified infant formula based on baby’s hunger and fullness cues. • Cuddle and make eye contact while feeding. Avoid propping bottles. • At 6 months, offer sips of water in an open cup, but don’t let baby fill up on water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer human milk or iron-fortified infant formula based on baby’s hunger and fullness cues. • Babies who eat iron-rich foods (meat, fish, eggs, beans, iron-enriched cereal) daily can be offered pasteurized, whole cow milk or pasteurized, whole, fortified goat milk. • Formula-fed babies who eat iron-rich foods daily can be transitioned to pasteurized, whole cow milk or pasteurized, whole, fortified goat milk. • If cow or goat milk is given, offer in an open cup with meals or snacks. • Offer sips of water but don’t let baby fill up on water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human milk is recommended until age 2 and beyond. • If not drinking human milk, offer 2 cups (500 mL) of pasteurized, whole cow milk or pasteurized, whole, fortified goat milk in an open cup with meals or snacks, or up to 3 cups (750 mL) per day. • If your child does not drink human milk or whole cow or goat milk, or if they eat little or no iron-rich foods, offer iron-fortified infant formula until age 2 years. • Offer water for thirst. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human milk is recommended until age 2 and beyond. • If not drinking human milk, offer 2 cups (500 mL) of pasteurized cow milk, pasteurized, fortified goat milk or unsweetened, fortified plant-based beverage in an open cup with meals or snacks, or up to 3 cups (750 mL) per day. • Lower-fat cow or goat milk can be offered instead of whole fat milk. • Offer water for thirst.

Most children need a vitamin D supplement to reach the recommended daily amount.

Children age 0 to 24 months: A liquid vitamin D supplement of 10 mcg (400 IU) a day is recommended for children who are fed human milk.

Children age 1 year and older: Most children need a vitamin D supplement to reach the recommended amount of 15 mcg (600 IU) per day. Talk to your doctor or contact a HealthLinkBC Dietitian, free of charge [by email](#) or by calling 8-1-1.

See also: [Vitamin D and Your Health \(HealthLinkBC\)](#)



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Milk and Plant-based Drinks

- Pasteurized, whole cow milk or pasteurized, whole, fortified goat milk can be offered starting at age 9-12 months, if baby is eating iron-rich foods daily, like meat, fish, eggs, beans, iron-enriched cereal.
- Cow milk, goat milk and soy beverage have more protein than most plant-based beverages.
- For babies and children under 2 years, plant-based beverages don't have enough fat or other nutrients. They are okay in small amounts in cooking, but not as their main drink.
- Plant-based drinks like soy, oat, almond or rice can be offered at age 2 years. Make sure they are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.
- Toddler drinks like Enfagrow® or Nido1+ are not equal to formula or cow milk & not needed unless recommended by a doctor or dietitian.

What about Juice?

- Babies and children don't need juice.
- Fruit juice is naturally high in sugar - sipping it all day can lead to tooth decay and kids not being hungry for meals.
- If giving juice, limit to ½ cup (125 mL) a day. Offer it in an open cup, with a meal or snack.

Bottle or Cup?

- At age 6 months, help baby learn to drink from an open cup - this is an important life skill.
- Try to wean baby off the bottle by age 12 months. Children who use a bottle beyond 1 year are more at risk of low iron and more likely to have cavities (unless the bottle contains just water).
- See tips in [Hello Cup, Bye-Bye Bottle \(Northern Health\)](#).



Other Drinks

Some drinks can fill your child's stomach and leave little room for more nutrient-rich foods and fluids. Avoid or limit:

- Tea, herbal tea, iced tea.
- Hot chocolate, coffee, coffee-based drinks.
- Pop, fruit juices, sports drinks, vitamin drinks.
- Drinks with artificial sweeteners.

What about Water?

- Babies younger than 6 months should not have water. If they are thirsty, they will want to breastfeed or formula-feed more often; follow their cues.
- Starting at 6 months, babies can have sips of water in an open cup.
- If your baby is formula-fed, follow [Making & Storing Formula](#) (HealthLinkBC File 69b).
- In older homes, let tap water run for 2 minutes before using to reduce traces of lead and copper.

Questions?

- Call HealthLinkBC 8-1-1 and ask to talk to a Dietitian.
- Email a [HealthLinkBC Dietitian](#).
- Visit www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating.
- Speak to a Doctor, Nurse or Dietitian.
- Contact your local Health Unit www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/health-unit-