

Healthy hydration

Children should have at least 6-8 drinks everyday. Different drinks can have different effects on children's health and the information below is designed to help you choose a healthy balance of drinks for your child.

Water – drink plenty!

Water is a good choice throughout the day because it hydrates without providing extra energy (calories) or harming teeth.

Milk- have regularly!

Milk is a useful source of nutrients, especially protein, B vitamins, iodine and calcium. Most children can have lower fat milks such as 1% or semi-skimmed. Unsweetened, calcium fortified dairy alternatives can also be included. Milky drinks containing added sugars such as milkshakes, hot chocolate and malted drinks should be limited.

Fruit and vegetable juices and smoothies – can have once a day.

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

Sugar-free drinks – have occasionally!

Sugar-free drinks hydrate without adding extra sugars but it's a good idea for most drinks to be milk or water. Fizzy drinks may contain acids that can be harmful to teeth. Be aware that some of these drinks also contain caffeine.

Tea and coffee – have occasionally (and in small amounts if caffeinated).

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 (aged 5-11) to drink decaffeinated tea and coffee with reduced-fat milks and no added sugars.

Sugary drinks – avoid!

Sugary drinks are best avoided as they provide sugars, but few other nutrients. Fizzy drinks could contain acids that can also be harmful to teeth and some soft drinks contain caffeine.

Sports and energy drinks – not suitable for children!

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.

For more information on healthy hydration for children visit www.nutrition.org.uk