

## What Should My Baby Drink? Guidelines for Parents



### Highlights

Babies under 6 months should only drink breastmilk or infant formula.

Water can be introduced in small amounts once your baby reaches 6 months, but breastmilk or formula should remain the main drink until 12 months.

Fruit juices, soft drinks, and cordial are unsuitable for babies under 12 months.

Offer extra feeds in hot weather or if your baby has a fever, but do not give water unless advised by a doctor.

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### Why Water Isn't Suitable for Babies Under 6 Months

Before 6 months, breastmilk or formula provides all the nutrients and hydration

your baby needs. Offering water can reduce the intake of these essential nutrients, leading to poor growth or dehydration. Excessive water or overly diluted formula can also pose serious health risks, including an imbalance of nutrients in your baby's blood, which can be dangerous.

### **When Can I Give My Baby Water?**

At around 6 months, you can start offering small amounts of boiled and cooled tap water, but it should not replace breastmilk or formula. Breastmilk or formula should remain the primary drink until your baby turns 12 months. After that, water and cow's milk or breastmilk become the main beverages. You can offer water in a cup to help your baby learn to drink from it.

If your baby has started solids, offering water during mealtime can also help with digestion and prevent constipation.

### **What Should My Baby Drink in Hot Weather?**

In hot weather, babies under 6 months should have more frequent breastfeeds or bottle-feeds to stay hydrated. Do not give water unless recommended by a doctor. Make sure you drink enough water yourself if you're breastfeeding. Signs of proper hydration include 6 to 8 wet nappies in 24 hours.

To make breastfeeding more comfortable, you can try:

Placing a towel, sheet, or pillowcase between you and your baby.  
Lying down to reduce skin contact and stay cool.

### **What Should My Baby Drink if They Have a Fever?**

If your baby has a fever and is under 6 months, offer extra breastfeeds. For formula-fed babies, offer smaller amounts more frequently. Water should only be given if recommended by a doctor. For babies over 6 months, continue breastfeeding or bottle-feeding, and offer water between feeds. It's important to focus on hydration rather than food intake during a fever.

If your baby is under three months and has a fever above 38°C, seek medical advice immediately.

## **Can My Baby Drink Other Drinks?**

Fruit juice, soft drinks, and cordial are not suitable for babies under 12 months. Avoid offering caffeinated drinks (like tea or coffee), energy drinks, or alcohol at any age, as they can be harmful to your child's health.

## **Tools and Assistance**

If you're unsure about your baby's hydration needs or introducing water into their diet, here are some helpful resources:

**Online Forums and Parent Support:** Connect with other parents to discuss feeding strategies and tips for managing your baby's hydration during illness or in extreme weather.

**Pediatrician or Health Visitor:** For personalized advice on your baby's hydration and nutrition.

**Breastfeeding Support Groups:** Join a community for guidance on breastfeeding techniques and comfort, especially in hot weather.

**Baby Care Apps:** Use apps to track your baby's feeding and hydration patterns to ensure they're getting enough fluids.