

Fluid Facts for Babies and Young Children

Breastmilk is the best choice for your baby for the first 2 years and beyond. Breastmilk helps protect your child against infections and other illness.

0 to 6 Months	6 to 9 Months	9 to 12 Months	1 to 2 Years	2 to 6 Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months of life. • Non-breastfed babies should be offered iron-fortified infant formula until age 1 year. • Follow your baby's hunger and fullness cues when breastfeeding or bottle-feeding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to breastfeed or offer iron-fortified infant formula based on your baby's hunger and fullness cues. • Babies can begin to drink small amounts of tap water. • Help your baby learn to drink from an open cup. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to breastfeed or offer iron-fortified infant formula based on your baby's hunger and fullness cues. • Babies can have small amounts of pasteurized, whole fat cow milk. • Offer milk in an open cup at meal or snack times only. • Pasteurized goat milk with added folic acid may be given as an alternate to cow milk. Goat milk usually does not have vitamin D added (check label). See vitamin D insert below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding is recommended until age 2 years and beyond. • Formula-fed babies can be switched to pasteurized, whole fat cow or goat milk. • Limit cow or goat milk to 2 cups (500 mL) per day. • If your baby does not drink breast milk, cow milk or goat milk, continue to offer infant formula until age 2 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding is recommended until age 2 years and beyond. • Offer 2 cups (500 mL) cow milk, goat milk or fortified plant-based beverage per day. See reverse for more information. • Lower-fat cow or goat milk (1% or 2% MF) can be offered instead of whole fat milk.

Vitamin D for Strong Bones

Babies age 0 to 12 months who are breastfed or partly breastfed need a vitamin D supplement of 400 IU each day until age 12 months.

Most children age 1 year and older need a vitamin D supplement to reach the recommended intake of 600 IU per day. Talk to your doctor or nurse, or call HealthLink BC Dietitians (8-1-1).

See also [Food Sources of Calcium and Vitamin D](#) (HealthLinkBC File 68e)



Fluid Facts for Babies and Young Children

Milk and Plant-Based Drinks

- Pasteurized, whole cow milk or goat milk with added folic acid may be offered starting at age 9-12 months, when your baby is eating iron-rich foods at least 2-3 times each day.
- Goat milk usually does not contain vitamin D. Make sure your child gets vitamin D from other sources, like a liquid supplement.
- Cow milk, goat milk and soy beverage have more protein than almond, rice or coconut drinks.
- **Plant-based drinks do not have enough fat for babies and children under age 2 years.**
- Plant-based drinks like soy, almond or rice can be offered starting at age 2 years. Make sure they are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.
- “Toddler” drinks, like Enfagrow® are not needed.

Say “No” to Juice

- **Babies and children do not need juice.**
- Sipping juice all day can lead to tooth decay and picky eating.
- It is better to offer fruit, vegetables and water.
- If offering juice, **limit to ½ cup (125 mL) per day** of 100% real juice.

Bottle or Cup?

- **At age 6 months, babies can begin to drink tap water from an open cup.**
- Learning to drink from an open cup is an important skill.
- Breastfed babies can go straight from breast to cup.
- To avoid a bottle or sip cup habit, try to wean baby off the bottle and onto an open cup by age 12 months.



Other Drinks...

These drinks can fill your child’s stomach, and leave little room for breast milk, infant formula or solid foods:

- Tea, hot chocolate, coffee and coffee-based drinks
- Pop, fruit drinks, fruit punch, sports drinks and vitamin drinks
- Herbal or iced tea
- Drinks with artificial sweeteners

What about Water?

- **Babies under 6 months of age should not have water;** if they are thirsty, they will want to breastfeed or formula-feed more often; follow baby’s cues.
- Starting at age 6 months, babies can have small amounts of tap water in an open cup.
- If your baby is formula-fed, follow [Feeding Your Baby Formula: Safely Making and 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 HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and ask to talk to a Dietitian

- Visit www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating
- Speak to your Doctor, Nurse or Dietitian
- Contact your local Health Unit
www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/health-unit-locations