

Water has many important roles in the body. It helps transport nutrients, maintains blood volume, regulated body temperature and removes waste products. It is very important for children to drink enough fluid so their body can function properly and they can feel their best. Children with special needs may have difficulty drinking or letting others know they are thirsty. Saliva loss can also increase the amount of fluid required each day.

The fluid requirement of children is based on their age and weight. The following requirements are a guide:

0-12 months: 150ml/kg/day (for example, a child weighing 7kg should have approximately 1050ml/day)

1-3 years: 120ml/kg/day (for example, a child weighing 10kg should have approximately 1200ml/day)

Over 3 years: 1000-1500ml minimum/day (may require more).

*Note:* Children with gastrostomies need the same amount of fluid as other children.

Thickened fluids are just as effective.

### **Signs that a child requires more fluid**

- Strong smelling nappies
- Yellow urine
- Less wet nappies than normal due to decreased amount of urine (infants should have 6-8 wet nappies/day and an older children should have 4-5/day)
- Constipation
- Headaches, tiredness
- Dry lips and skin
- More thirsty than usual
- Dark circles around eyes
- Weight loss.

### **Good sources of fluid**

- For children over 1 year, water is the best source of fluid.
- Cows milk is also important on a daily basis to provide important nutrients that children need to grow.
- Other fluids can also be included into the daily fluid intake, such as juice, ice blocks, jelly and pureed food with liquid.
- For young infants under 12 months breast milk is the best fluid - for the first 6 months, it provides all the nutrition the infant needs.
- Infant formula should be used for those who are not breast fed. Cows milk should not be introduced until 1 year of age.

*If a child is passing clear urine regularly throughout the day, it is likely that they are meeting their daily fluid requirement.*

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