

Drinking Water for Babies

When can my baby have water?

Breast milk or infant formula are a baby's main food and drink for the first 12 months.

Babies under six months only need breast milk or infant formula, even in hot weather. Giving your baby water at this age may mean they drink less breast milk or infant formula.

Around six months of age is a good time to start to offer small amounts of cooled boiled water in a cup. This can take some practice. Start with small amounts of water while your baby gets used to holding a cup.

Making water safe to drink

Water given to babies to drink should be boiled to make it safe:

- If using an electric kettle, boil water until it switches off.
- If using a stovetop kettle or pot, boil water until it comes to a rolling boil. This is when the water does not stop boiling if stirred.

Cool the boiled water to a safe temperature before giving it to your baby to drink. Store it in a clean and sterilised bottle in the fridge.

Town tap water

Town tap water has fluoride in it, which is important for your baby's teeth. It is recommended that:

- Town tap water is boiled and cooled until your baby is 12 months old.
- Home filtered tap water is always boiled and cooled before drinking.

Tank water

Tank water can sometimes be unsafe to drink. Keeping tanks clean and well maintained can lower the risk. It is recommended that:

- Tank water is boiled and cooled before drinking.

If you use tank water talk to your dentist about your child's teeth as rainwater does not contain fluoride.

[Find out more about keeping your water tank system safe](#)

Store-bought bottled water

Bottled water is not needed unless in an emergency. Only use if the bottle has not been opened or damaged.

Never use mineral water. It has high levels of salt and minerals, which is not good for your baby's kidneys.

‘Boil water’ and ‘do not consume’ alerts

If you are living in an area of ‘boil water alert’, or ‘do not consume alert’, it is important to follow advice given. ‘Boil water alerts’ mean water must be boiled to make it safe before using it. ‘Do not consume alerts’ mean the water is not safe to use and should not be given to babies and children.

[Find out more information about mains drinking water](#)

[Check if there are ‘boil water’ alerts in your area](#)

[Check if there are ‘do not consume’ alerts in your area](#)

How to clean and sterilise bottles

All bottles used for storing cooled boiled water need to be sterilised first to make sure the water stays safe for babies to drink. There are four different ways you can clean and sterilise bottles:

- boiling
- antibacterial solutions
- steam sterilisation
- microwave sterilisation – do not put bottles straight into the microwave as this will not sterilise them and they may get damaged.

[Find out more information about cleaning and sterilising bottles](#)

Want to know more

Ask your GP or child health nurse.