

Did you know that your body is two-thirds water? To put it another way, if your child weighs 40 kilos, around 26 kilos of them is...water! That's 26 litres, or roughly 52 pints of water. Even our bones are 20% water...and the human brain is more than three quarters water.

We are basically pretty wet, and our bodies need water to work properly. We can survive without food for ages...but without water we'd only last a few days.

We lose water all the time, even in winter. Water is lost in your breath and when you go to the toilet. You lose water even faster when you're sweating.

Of course, we replace the fluids all the time. Many foods are great for replacing lost water, including soup and fruit. We also replace our body water when we drink. It's surprisingly easy to be a little bit dehydrated (that's what we call it when your body is short of water). Being slightly

dehydrated may affect your child's' short-term memory and their ability to do simple maths. Mild dehydration can even cause constipation!

Keeping yourself and your family properly topped up with water has many health benefits, and we'll talk about these later.



In a recent school survey in County Clare, only 5 % of students drank water at any time during the day!

What Should We Drink?

What your children drink is important. Studies in America have found that when children switch from fizzy drinks (like cola) to water, it helps them to manage their weight better. Fizzy drinks have high levels of sugar, and that is a problem. They are full of calories.

Apart from rotting your child's teeth, the sugar is bad news for your child's system. It plays havoc with appetite, and provides unnecessary calories. If your child has a serious fizzy drink habit over a long period of time, it may increase their chances of getting type II diabetes. Soft drinks (even diet drinks) have also been linked to osteoporosis - brittle bones.

The odd can of soft drink won't kill you...BUT don't make a habit of it!

Water is the best (and cheapest!) fluid that we can drink.

Some other fluids that provide water include:

Fruit Juices and Smoothies These can be a bit sugary, but they are generally pretty healthy. They usually contain antioxidants-which are seriously GOOD for your health-along with some vitamins. More on these in future factsheets. Avoid false fruit juices-just because it's a nice "Sunny" colour doesn't mean it's from a fruit-so choose something that says "fruit juice" on the label. If you want to

be really healthy, dilute with a splash of water.

Tea and coffee are interesting, because they contain caffeine, which causes dehydration (we call caffeine a diuretic). Colas also contain caffeine. The odd cup of tea or weak coffee is OK ...but don't let your child drink too much! Several cups of tea/coffee will dehydrate your child. Tea and coffee also contain beneficial antioxidants.

Milk couldn't be more natural and is a good source of calcium.

Fruit has a high water content, and is a perfect snack. Some fruits are 80% water. Oranges, grapes, apples and tangerines are all good

choices. Fruit is incredibly healthy for many other reasons-the ideal snack!

Soup is a great way to keep hydrated in cool weather. Scientists have recently found that chicken soup is great for your symptoms when you have a cold!



"Three quarters of the human brain is made of water!"

Benefits of Drinking Water

- Helps you to stay cool
- Great for skin
- Good for energy levels
- Improves memory
- Helps you to think
- Good for circulation
- Good for muscle tone
- Helps your digestion
- Gets rid of toxins
- Helps prevent constipation
- Helps prevent urinary infections
- Great for sports performance
- Helps prevent colds
- Lubricates your joints

"Look at the colour of your pee...it shouldn't be too dark or too smelly."



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Am I Dehydrated?

One trick we have used with Olympic athletes is to have them monitor their own pee...which is surprisingly easy to do. Just encourage your child to take a look next time they go to the toilet!

If their pee is dark coloured, they need to drink more fluids. Pee should ideally be clear or very pale yellow, it should not be very smelly,

and you should make quite a bit of it. If your child can go for hours without peeing, and their pee is dark yellow/gold and smelly, they need to drink more water.

The RedBranch Pee Checklist:

1. Lots of wee
2. Light colour
3. Little smell



Top Tips for Staying Hydrated

Follow these top tips to keep your family hydrated and healthy:

- Encourage your child to keep a bottle of water with them all day, and to sip frequently when they take a break.
- Encourage your child to drink when they are exercising, especially when it's hot.
- Don't let your child drink too much tea or coffee.
- Avoid fizzy drinks...they contain too much sugar and are very acidic. If you stop buying them, your child will stop asking for them.
- A dash of fruit juice or a slice of lemon/lime added to a jug of water makes a tasty treat for your family. Try adding cranberry, orange, or apple juice to some sparkling water.
- Encourage your child to sip frequently rather than guzzling, and to drink as soon as they feel thirsty.
- Remember that water tastes better when it's cold.
- Soup is a great way to keep the family hydrated at mealtimes.

What About Sports Drinks?

Just because it says "sport" on the label doesn't make it good for your child! These drinks tend to be fairly sugary, and most of the time you'd be better off with water. If you or your child is a serious athlete, contact RedBranch and we will give you guidelines on hydration and refueling for your chosen sport.

The Bottom Line

Keep your family topped up...stay hydrated! Encourage your child to check their pee, and avoid colas and other sugary/acidic drinks. Choose water or milk instead.



Stay hydrated and keep your brain functioning properly.