

# Do Babies Need to Drink Water?

Doctors tell parents that healthy babies less than 6 months of age should not drink water. Drinking too much water can hurt babies. It puts them at risk for water intoxication.

Babies get thirsty and want something to drink. Research shows, however, that babies do not normally need extra water. Their bodies need breast milk or formula. Breast milk and formula provide proper fluid intake. They contain the calories that babies need for healthy growth and development.

Babies' kidneys, like other parts of their bodies, are not fully mature. When they drink too much water, their bodies get rid of sodium along with the water. It can cause water intoxication.

## What are the signs of water intoxication?

- The baby may become irritable and drowsy;
- Her face may become puffy;
- His body temperature may drop; or
- She may develop seizures.

Often parents do not notice that anything is wrong until the baby has a seizure. If untreated, the baby can develop brain damage or die.

Doctors also tell parents to avoid:

- Over-diluted formula. Follow the instructions carefully when mixing formula. Do not try to stretch the formula with extra water.
- Pediatric drinks that contain electrolytes. If your baby is sick and you think he needs extra fluids, call his doctor for advice.

Talk to your doctor for advice on when it is safe to give your baby water. Once your baby is sitting up and eating solid food, it should be OK to give her a *little* water from a cup. Until age 1 year, stick with breast milk and formula.



## Did You Know?

Water intoxication

can also occur during swimming lessons.

Babies under 12 months can swallow too much water while in the pool. After a lesson, parents should watch their baby closely for changes in behavior.

*Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.*



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