

# Drinking water for infants

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In accordance with the Washington State guidelines for childcare centers, infants should only be given human milk or infant formula until they reach the age of 12 months.

Unless a licensed healthcare provider has given written permission, infants cannot be given water or electrolyte solutions such as Pedialyte®.

In addition, written permission is required before medication, supplements, or sweeteners are added to human milk or formula. Infants may only be offered juice once they are 12 months or older.

If infants need additional fluid Most pediatricians will recommend at home, beginning at 6 months of age infants can be offered 4 to 8 oz of water per day when eating pureed foods. However, Washington State guidelines are more

restrictive, not permitting infants under the age of 12 months to drink water in childcare settings.

Giving infants water can disrupt their electrolyte balance and potentially cause hyponatremia (low sodium levels in the blood). Sodium levels in the blood are tightly regulated in the body. Due to their small size and small amount of total blood volume compared to an adult or older child, when an infant is given water this can reduce their sodium blood levels.

When sodium levels drop too low infants can develop seizures due to hyponatremia and in extreme cases this can be life threatening. The risk of hyponatremia is higher in sick infants who are vomiting or have diarrhea. This also highlights the importance of properly mixing formula. If formula is overly diluted due to a higher ratio of water to formula than recommended, it can also raise the risk of hyponatremia.

Sources: Accessed August 29th,, 2023

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