
A guide for parents and carers

How much should my child drink?

Children need to drink the right amount of fluid to stay healthy and to keep the urine (wee) in their bladder dilute. Dilute urine is pale, straw colour. If urine becomes too concentrated (dark yellow coloured) it can irritate the bladder, making it less able to hold on to the wee. This means that your child may need to go to the toilet more often and may have to rush to get there in time.

The bladder is stretchy and learns to hold on to as much urine as it needs to. If your child only drinks small amounts the bladder learns to only hold on to small amounts of urine. Therefore, it is important that your child drinks the recommended amount for their age and size, as this ensure their bladder becomes effective at holding on to urine.

Toddlers should be having about 1000mls a day, pre-school children should have about 1250mls a day, primary school age children should be having about 1500mls per day, teenage girls should have about 1800mls and teenage boys should have about 2500mls. These amounts are a guide. Children will need extra if they are very active, larger than their peers, or if it is very hot.

Children should have their daily fluid intake divided into about six to eight drinks a day. Three of these (about half of their intake for primary age children) should be drunk during school hours.

Keeping bladders healthy

Some drinks are better than others for promoting bladder health. Water is the best drink. However, if your child is reluctant with water, then dilute fruit squashes, preferably sugar-free, may help them to drink the right amount.

Your child should avoid fizzy drinks as these can irritate the bladder.

Bladder health for children

For babies and toddlers:

Once fully weaned it is important that babies start to have their drinks in a regular pattern, throughout the day. Encourage them to have a water-based drink with every meal and another drink midway between meals. This regular fluid intake also helps with potty/toilet training.

For children over one year old, try to limit milk intake to not more than a pint per day.

What to do if your child has a bladder problem

If your child appears to leave it to the last minute to go to the toilet, dances, holds themselves, or if they get damp underwear or are wetting, speak to their healthcare professional. You may be asked to keep a record for two or three days, of about what and how much they are drinking and of when they use the toilet to pass urine and to empty their bowels. This is because constipation can cause problems for the bladder. The records will help you and their healthcare professional see how their bladder and bowel is working and may help indicate what is needed to make the bladder issues better. If your child is not drinking as about the amount = expected for their age, you might be asked to help them adjust the number and amount of water-based drinks they have in the day. If they are having drinks that appear to be making the wetting worse, you should avoid these.

Your healthcare professional will be able to suggest other ways to help your child overcome any wetting or other bladder problems. These may include treatment for constipation if that is present and drinking and toileting routines, or medication to help the bladder problems.

If your child suddenly starts to have a problem with wetting, or if their urine (wee) becomes smelly or painful to pass, then you must always seek advice from a healthcare professional.

Related information

Find more information about child bladder and bowel health in our information library at www.bbuk.org.uk. You can also contact the [Bladder & Bowel UK confidential helpline](http://www.bbuk.org.uk) (0161 214 4591).

There is also information about bedwetting at www.stopbedwetting.org.

For further advice on bladder and bowel problems speak to your GP or other healthcare professional.