



## Drink up: Choose water first for thirst

### None of my kids drink a lot of water. Should I encourage them to drink more?

Yes, fill up that water glass and encourage kids to drink up.

Just like it does with vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, the Institute of Medicine offers recommendations for daily adequate intake of water. Research suggests that most children and adolescents aren't getting enough.

For school-age children, expert panels generally recommend daily water intake of about 4 cups for children 4-8 years old, 7-8 cups for youth ages 9-13, and 8-11 cups for those 14-18 years old. It's recommended that children consume this quantity of water daily in liquid form (water, unflavored lowfat milk, and 100 percent fruit juices). For teens, that translates into drinking enough water to fill a 2-liter bottle.

It should be noted that in addition to the daily recommended amounts of water from beverages, there are additional recommendations for water that's contained in food (particularly fruits and vegetables). But, even considering all water sources, the average intake for children and adolescents falls short.

Young people who drink more water gain a boatload of benefits. First, higher water consumption can help in the battle against childhood obesity. One study found that plain drinking water accounted for only 33 percent of total water intake among adolescents, with the remaining intake consisting primarily of beverages that

contained excess calories. Choosing plain water more often — "water first for thirst" — would likely decrease the amount of sugary beverages children drink. And that can be significant: A 2001 study in *The Lancet* found that for every 12-ounce sugary soda a child consumed each day, the odds that he or she would become obese over the next 18 months increased by 60 percent.

In addition, drinking tap water is cheap and usually provides fluoride to reduce cavities. Also, if the water comes from a mineral-rich source — normally groundwater rather than spring water — it can be a small but significant source of some minerals.

Public health authorities suggest parents can help children increase water consumption by:

- Offering water first when your children say they are thirsty.
- Having only water and other unsweetened beverages available or within your child's reach
- Modeling the behavior — drink more water yourself.
- Checking your children's school policies on allowing children to visit the water fountain often or bring bottled water into the classroom.
- Dressing it up — add slices of lemon, lime or cucumber to water to add interest and variety.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1043, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*



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### Editor:

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