



TEN STEP TUESDAY

Do Breastfed Babies Need Water on Hot Days?

It's Ten Step Tuesday!



Many parents worry that their fully-breastfed baby may not be getting enough to drink in hot weather. A parent may ask if they should give water or fruit juice to baby 'just in case'. The answer in most cases is that extra fluids are not required if your baby is breastfed whenever he needs. And this may be more often than usual on hot days—just as you are drinking more often.

Breastmilk contains a perfectly balanced ratio of nutrition and hydration. It is a living fluid,

ever-changing to suit your baby's needs. The first milk a baby gets from a full breast has a lower fat content and naturally quenches baby's thirst. Once the initial let-down has occurred, the fat content of the milk gradually increases as the breast softens. This later milk has a creamier appearance and satisfies baby's hunger.

Giving the baby a fluid other than your milk means the baby will be filling up on an inferior source of nutrition. It is important that babies nurse frequently, and not receive supplements, including water, so that mom maintains a plentiful milk supply. Breastfeeding parents should be encouraged to offer the breast frequently in warm weather so baby has plenty of opportunity to quench his thirst. In many cases, on hot weather days a thirsty baby may seem to want to breastfeed more frequently but for shorter periods.

An older baby or toddler who is no longer exclusively breastfed should be encouraged to drink water between breastfeeds and complementary foods. You can also offer extra 'snack' breastfeeds to keep him well hydrated.

One of the many conveniences of breastfeeding is how easy it is to go away with your baby. Parents can rest easy and enjoy the summer months knowing that baby is not only well hydrated, but also receiving the best possible nutrition—mom's milk.

References:

- <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bf-info/you-and-your-breastfed-baby/cool>
- <https://kellymom.com/nutrition/starting-solids/baby-water/>
- American Academy of Pediatrics, "During the first 6 months of age, even in hot climates, water and juice are unnecessary for breastfed infants and may introduce contaminants or allergens."

For more information contact

Cara Gerhardt, BSN RN IBCLC, coordinator@high5kansas.org