Drinks for 0-2 year olds

A guide to keeping your child’s teeth healthy
Breast milk or infant formula should be the main drink throughout the first year of life.

You may choose to continue them longer.

- Breast milk is the best drink for your baby - even after you start to wean at four months old.

Don't use soya based formulas unless a doctor or health visitor advises it. They contain sugars which can cause tooth decay.
Choosing drinks without sugar for your baby will:

- set healthy habits for life
- protect first teeth from decay
- keep your baby’s smile looking good
- improve your baby’s overall health and nutrition
Other drinks

Water - use tap water. Boil and cool it for babies under six months old.

Cow's milk - from twelve months you can start to give full fat cow's milk as a main drink. Cow's milk will not cause tooth decay. It also contains calcium, which is important for strong bones.

Fresh fruit juice - from six months old. Even fresh fruit juice contains natural sugars. Dilute it as much as possible - about one part fresh fruit juice to ten parts water. Keep it to mealtimes when it causes least damage to teeth. It will also help with iron absorption. Give it in a cup not a bottle.

Tea - if you give tea, don't give it before twelve months and make it very milky with no added sugar. Don't give it at mealtimes - it will interfere with your child absorbing iron from his or her food.
Baby drinks - dentists do not recommend that you give commercial baby drinks. They may contain sugars which can decay teeth. Always follow the instructions.

Cordials, squashes and fizzy drinks - many contain sugar or artificial sweeteners. It is not recommended that you give cordials, squash or fizzy drinks to under-threes.

Reading labels - check for sugars

Many drinks contain sugars. These will be listed on the label: glucose, glucose syrup, fructose, concentrated fruit juice, sucrose, dextrose, honey, inverted sugar, maltose, hydrolysed starches

These are all sugars and can cause tooth decay.

Artificial sweeteners are not recommended for infants. You may see these listed on drinks labels: saccharine, aspartame, acelsulfame k
Cups: a step forward for your baby

- If babies nurse sugary drinks in bottles it can cause very rapid tooth decay.
- Encourage your baby to drink from a cup as soon as he or she can hold one - usually by about six months old.

- A lidded cup is the first stage of your baby's progress to an open cup.
- Valve cups are not recommended.
- Sugary drinks in cups can decay teeth too.
- Never give your baby a sweet drink last thing at night.
- Other danger times for sweet drinks are between meals, in the buggy or as a comforter.
- Do not leave drinks in view for your child to help him or herself.
- By twelve months old give all drinks in a cup not in a bottle.
Learning to **drink** from a **cup** is messy and fun...

here goes!

oooh!

whoops!

got it!

...but it’s all part of growing up