



Water Matters

Why Water Matters for children



Children and water

Being properly hydrated is important for all of us. It is fundamental to good health and well-being. For children, hydration is especially important.

Health professionals recommend two drinks for children: water and milk.

For school-age children, water is a great way to hydrate: it is tooth-friendly and calorie-free so helps prevent obesity.

Juices and other drinks containing natural or added sugar are okay as an occasional treat with a meal but should never be the main source of hydration.

Encouraging children to drink plain water teaches them healthy habits – for life.

Dehydration

Research has shown that 6 out of 10 of children are thought to arrive at school in a dehydrated state. Even a 1% drop in hydration can impair physical and academic performance so it's a poor way to start the day.

Why think drink?

Knowing when you are thirsty doesn't come naturally; children have to learn this behaviour. Children's higher total body water content and higher respiratory and metabolic rate makes them more vulnerable to risk of dehydration, compared with adults. Children need to be 'taught' to drink frequently and healthily.

Children should have 6-8 drinks a day and it has been proved that it encourages healthy hydration if they keep water on their desks.

Water is top of the class

Schools need to get the water message across that water is a 'cool' drink in every sense. Research has shown that exam performance improves amongst students who drink water and are well-hydrated. The message is 'think drink to help you think'.

Cool schools

Water from a water cooler is convenient, tastes good and provides a visible reminder to drink healthily. Whether you opt for a bottled or mains-fed cooler depends on a variety of factors. And of course healthy hydration should not stop at 4 o'clock in term time. Having a domestic water cooler in your home keeps that healthy hydration habit going throughout the day and into the weekend and school holidays.

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Which waters are suitable for children?

Whether you choose a bottled water cooler or a mains-fed water cooler for your school or home depends on a number of practical considerations. If there is no handy access to the mains water system or if you just prefer natural or spring water, bottled water coolers are the perfect choice. If on the other hand you have a suitable location for a mains-fed unit, but limited storage space for bottles, then a mains-fed unit may be for you.

Not all water coolers are equal

Whichever style of water cooler you choose, make sure of one thing. Choose a supplier that is a member of the British Water Cooler Association. Known as the BWCA, the Association is the leading trade body ensuring standards of safety and hygiene that are at the top of their class. BWCA members must stick to strict Codes of Practice and good conduct and are independently audited every year. By dealing with a BWCA member you know you are getting the best. Visit www.bwca.org.uk/find-a-member.php to check who to do business with.

The sustainable choice

Bottled water coolers are highly sustainable: bottles are collected, cleansed and reused many times over whilst main-fed coolers of course use water from the mains. In addition, many BWCA members follow the '5 for 5 Sustainability Pledge'. For details visit our website.

For more information

The BWCA also publishes detailed guidelines for schools on:

- Sanitisation of Water Coolers
- Location, Use and Servicing of Water Coolers.

These and further information can be obtained by visiting www.bwca.org.uk

Healthy Hydration Chart

There's one easy way to know if you are properly hydrated – check the colour of your urine against our 'pee chart'. Pale is good; dark urine means you could be in need of fluid. And if you find you are dehydrated, here's an easy way to rehydrate healthily: head straight to that water cooler... simple.

well hydrated

Your urine is an ideal, pale straw colour. Keep up the good work.

You're okay but you could do with a small glass of water now.

You may be a little dehydrated. Drink a couple of glasses of water now.

You need to drink about up to half litre of water right now.

Not good! You are dehydrated and may have a headache. Drink a litre of water.

poorly hydrated

Note: if your urine is even darker than this and or red/dark brown then dehydration may not be the problem. Seek medical advice.



Choose a BWCA member –
for hydration you can trust
www.bwca.org.uk

Disclaimer: the information given here is for guidance only. If in doubt about your health seek attention from a medical professional.