



## For The Early Learning Centre Sector

# Nutrition Fact Sheet

## Importance of Hydration

Autumn 2025



**Proper hydration is essential for the health and wellbeing of children, particularly in childcare centres where they are highly active and developing rapidly. The body is made up of 60% water, and this fluid plays a vital role in nearly every bodily function. Dehydration can lead to a range of health issues and therefore it is important for caregivers and educators to understand the importance of hydration to ensure that children in childcare are getting enough fluids throughout the day.**

### Key Messages

- Hydration is important as it helps to support growth and development, regulates body temperature, improves cognitive function and focus, and boosts immune function.
- Dehydration can happen quickly, especially in young children who may not recognise or be able to communicate their needs for fluids.
- Hydration tips for childcare centres includes offering water regularly, model hydration habits, monitor fluid intake, provide hydration during meals and educate children about hydration.

### The Importance of Hydration

Hydration is important for a number of reasons including -

#### **Supports Growth and Development -**

Adequate hydration helps children maintain energy levels and focus, as well as optimal digestion to ensure that children are getting the most from their meals and snacks.

#### **Regulates Body Temperature -**

Young children have less capacity to regulate their body temperature compared to adults. This makes them particularly vulnerable to overheating, especially in active play outside or hot weather.

#### **Improves Cognitive Function and Focus -**

Dehydration can lead to fatigue and difficulty concentrating. For children in childcare settings, these effects can hinder their ability to participate in learning activities, interact with peers and engage in play. Even mild dehydration has been shown to negatively affect attention span, memory and motor coordination.

#### **Boost Immune Function -**

Children are constantly exposed to germs, especially in group settings like childcare centres. When children are well hydrated, they are better equipped to fight off illness and recover more quickly when they do get sick.



## Signs of Dehydration in Children

Dehydration can happen quickly, especially in young children who may not recognise or be able to communicate their need for fluids. It's important for childcare staff to monitor children's hydration status and be aware of the signs of dehydration, which include -

- Dry mouth and lips
- Fatigue or irritability
- Dizziness or headaches
- Sunken eyes or skin
- Decreased tear production when crying

## Hydration Tips for Childcare Centres

**Offer water regularly** - making water easily accessible to children throughout the day. Encourage water breaks during both structured and unstructured activities.

**Model Hydration Habits** - Caregivers and educators should model good hydration habits by drinking water regularly in front of the children. This reinforces the importance of hydration and can encourage children to follow suit.

**Monitor Fluid Intake** - Keep track of how much water children are consuming throughout the day, especially during outdoor play and active periods. Be mindful of any child who seems more prone to dehydration or is reluctant to drink.

**Provide Hydration During Meals** - Make sure that water is available during snack and mealtime. Offering fluids with meals helps to ensure that children are staying hydrated consistently throughout the day.

**Education Children About Hydration** - Teach children why drinking water is important for their health and work together to promote positive hydration habits.

## Conclusion

By ensuring that children are adequately hydrated, caregivers can help promote better physical health, improved cognitive function, and a stronger immune system. By promoting hydration, we can help children develop lifelong habits that will support their overall wellbeing and ensure that they grow up strong and healthy.

For more information, please visit:  
**Get Up & Grow - The Importance of Drinking Water**  
<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/10/the-importance-of-drinking-water-get-up-and-grow-the-importance-of-drinking-water.pdf>  
**The Sydney Children's Hospital Network - Dehydration in Babies and Children**  
<https://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/dehydration-babies-and-children-factsheet>

