

# Nutrition for Children: Cold & Flu Recovery

The tips in this handout may help your infant or child get the nutrition they need to feel better when they are recovering from a cold, flu, or other illness.



This information is **not** for when your child has a stomach bug (vomiting, diarrhea).

If your child has been vomiting or has diarrhea for more than 2 days, contact your child's healthcare provider.

When your child is sick, getting enough food, fluids, and rest can help them:

- maintain strength
- fight infection
- heal and recover
- continue growing

## Feeding your child

**Offer food more often than usual during and after illness.** This can help them feel better.

- Let your child eat when they are hungry, and not just at mealtimes.
- Offer small meals and snacks often.

**Tips to increase the amount of food your child eats:**

- Offer foods your child likes.
- If they need help, feed younger children or cut up their food. This helps save their energy for recovering.
- Feed them in a comfortable space.
- When possible, let them eat with family or friends.

**Offer higher protein and calorie foods.**

To learn more, visit [ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts](https://ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts), and search:

- Adding Calories and Protein to Your Child's Diet
- Making Smoothies with More Calories and Protein for Your Child

## Feeding your infant

- Offer extra breastfeeds by breast or bottle for breastfed infants.
- For formula fed infants, continue offering the usual amount of formula. You may need to offer formula more often if they are drinking less.
- If your infant (around 6 months old) eats solids, serve smaller amounts of food more often. Offer meats and infant cereals for higher calorie and protein options.



Weight loss or poor weight gain can be a sign of needing more nutrition.

If you think your infant has not gained weight, or if your child has lost weight, reach out to your healthcare team for help.

# Offer enough fluids

Offer your child drinks and other fluids they enjoy throughout the day to prevent dehydration. Dehydration is when the body doesn't get enough fluid.

Try these tips for children 1 year and older:

- Offer water often. Try water flavoured with fruit or cucumber.
- Serve milk, fortified soy beverage, and smoothies.
- Offer frozen pops made from yogurt smoothies, juices, or flavoured water.
- Some children may prefer warm drinks like apple cider, or warm water with lemon or orange slices.
- Offer ice chips or cubes if your child can chew and swallow them safely.
- Try small amounts of gelatin desserts or sorbet.
- Offer a variety of broth, bone broths, or soups.
- Avoid coffee, tea, or energy drinks which contain caffeine.
- Nutrition supplement drinks or oral rehydration solutions are not always needed. Discuss with your healthcare provider if your child could benefit from them.

## Fluids for infants

Infant age	What to offer
under 6 months	Offer breastmilk/formula. Water is not recommended.
6–12 months	Offer small amounts of water in an open cup. Do not replace breastmilk or infant formula with water.
12 months or older	Offer water to quench thirst between meals and snacks.

## Recommended amount of fluid

The amounts listed below are just a guide. Some days your child will drink more, or less, and that's okay. Watch for the signs of dehydration that are in the orange box below.

Age	Amount of fluid/day
2-3 years old	4 cups (900 mL)
4-8 years old	5 cups (1200 mL)
9-13 years old	6–7 cups (1600–1800 mL)
14-18 years old	7–10 cups (1800–2600 mL)

## Watch for signs of dehydration:

- Dry eyes, mouth
- Feeling dizzy or weak
- Increased thirst
- Less pee (fewer wet diapers) or dark yellow pee
- Unusually drowsy or fussy
- If your child has a fever, they may get dehydrated quicker.

## When to get help?

Call Health Link at 811 or your healthcare provider if you notice your child has any signs of dehydration.

## For More Information



- **Talk to your healthcare team.**
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on [ahs.ca/811](#).
- Visit [ahs.ca/nutritionhandouts](#)