



Drinking Water

Drinking water must be made available to participants upon request, including at meal times. **Child care centers and family day care homes must also directly offer water throughout the day in recognition that very young children may not be able to or know how to request it themselves.**

- Offering water means asking the participants whether they would like water at different times throughout the day. For very young children, this may require visual cues such as showing the cup or pitcher while verbally offering the water.
- While drinking water must be made available to participants during meal times, it does not have to be served alongside the meal.
- Water is not part of a reimbursable meal and may not be served in place of fluid milk.
- It does not have to be available for participants to self-serve but can be made available in a variety of ways which include having cups available next to the kitchen sink faucet, having water pitchers and cups set out, or simply providing water to a participant when it is requested.
- It is advised that participants not be served too much water before and during meal times; excess water may lead to reducing the amount of food and milk consumed by the participants.
- Water should be served with snacks when no other beverage is being served and in place of other high calorie, sweetened beverages (juice drinks, soda, sports drinks, etc.) that are served outside of meal times.