

Water Intoxication Fact Sheet

What is water intoxication?

Water intoxication is a disturbance in brain functions that results when too much water is consumed. This condition can be deadly. Children under 1 year of age are at greatest risk for water intoxication because of their small size.

Causes of water intoxication in infants

Over diluting formula – Adding more water than recommended to infant formula will result in a lower calorie formula and will not meet your baby’s calorie needs. Watered down formula may cause growth problems, nutrient deficiencies and water intoxication.

Supplemental water – A baby gets all the water she needs from breast milk or properly prepared infant formula. Extra water is not necessary and may harm your baby if too much is given.

Proper dilution of infant formula

Prepare infant formula according to the directions on the can or as instructed by your health care provider. In general, powdered infant formula is prepared by mixing one unpacked level scoop of dry powder to 2 ounces of water. Concentrated formula is prepared by adding equal parts of water to concentrated liquid. Water should not be added to ready to feed formula. Under diluting formula can also be harmful to your baby. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about preparing formula for your baby.

To make a single bottle

2 ounces of water + 1 scoop of powder = 2 ounces of formula
4 ounces of water + 2 scoops of powder = 4 ounces of formula
6 ounces of water + 3 scoops of powder = 6 ounces of formula
8 ounces of water + 4 scoops of powder = 8 ounces of formula

Risks of formula feeding

Preparing infant formula incorrectly is a risk of formula feeding. Breastfeeding offers many benefits (nutrition, immune, ease of preparation, etc.) that infant formula cannot provide. Continue breastfeeding and offer it over infant formula to protect the health of both child and mother.

Content Source:

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2008/dec/02/na-diluted-formula-nearly-kills-baby/news-metro/>

USDA memo from Patricia Daniels to State WIC directors, dated 12/5/08

Infant Nutrition and Feeding: A Guide for Use in the WIC and Commodity Supplemental Food Programs. Chapter 1, p. 25-27 and Chapter 4, p. 94-95.