



Drinking Water Frequently Asked Questions

1. What do you mean by “drinkable”?

Another word used is “potable”. This means that the water is safe for human consumption. It can come from a tap, faucet, jug, sink, fountain, bottle or portable container. Water that is unsafe, or not potable, would include water used for irrigation, water in animal troughs, contaminated sources or other sources which may be harmful to drink.

2. Why does water have to be available?

A focus of the 4-H Youth Development Program is to promote healthy living and “health” is one of our 4-H’s. The health and safety of 4-Hers is a priority at all activities and events. Drinking water is crucial for good health and will help prevent dehydration and heat illness (for more on heat illness see Clover Safe Note #19). Having water available ensures a healthy beverage choice. Water availability also reduces concerns that a child might be allergic to, or have medical conditions which prohibit the consumption of other beverages served.

3. What are the benefits of drinking water?

Research indicates that children who chose water as their beverage of choice, are more likely to maintain a healthy weight. Water is the best option for rehydration when participating in physical activities, and ensures more stamina to complete events. Water contains no sugar, which helps ensure stable energy levels and reduces fatigue. Water contains no caffeine, so hyper-activity, loss of concentration, and possible behavioral problems are avoided. Water is often times free. Choosing water when thirsty is a natural instinct, and should be fostered.

4. Is it okay to serve tap water?

In all parts of California, municipal tap water is monitored to ensure it meets safety standards. Check with your local municipal water provider or environmental health department to confirm the safety of the water you will be serving if you have concerns. Many agencies provide reports on-line.

5. Is it okay to serve bottled water?

*When possible, providing tap water from a pitcher or container is best. Allowing individuals to refill personal containers decreases cost and encourages healthy environmental practices. There are times however that bottled water will be necessary. It is the responsibility of the 4-H adult volunteer or staff in charge of the event, activity or meeting to provide the water. If the water available from the tap is unsafe, if consumption will occur during travel or in a space where tap water transport is not feasible, then bottled water is a good option. **Encourage recycling of the bottles.***

6. Is it okay to add fruit/vegetables/herbs (e.g., lemon slices, cucumber, melon, mint, etc.) to the water?

Offering “infused” or flavored water is a great idea, but drinkable water, without anything added, must always be available (should an allergy be an issue for someone, or a child have diabetes and need

to avoid fruit). Fruit/vegetables/herbs can be sliced and served in a bowl next to the water to be added.

7. Does a beverage made with water, like lemonade, count?

Many beverage mixes, which are combined with water, are available and served at 4-H events. These contain added sugars, flavors, and colorings, and therefore do not qualify as “drinkable water, without anything added”.

8. What if youth bring their own water, does that count?

Yes, it is okay if youth bring their own water. If you will be traveling, you can have water or water bottles on the list of the items for youth to bring as part of the trip instructions. However, you should have some water available should a bottle be lost or forgotten.

9. Does the water policy apply to 4-Hers at non-4-H events, such as activities at county fair?

No, county or state fairs are not a 4-H event, even though we may participate in them. Events sponsored by others are not covered by this policy. We encourage counties to work with fair boards and other organizations to share educational information on the necessity of water for participants. If I have a 4-H fundraiser that is selling beverages at a non 4-H event, do I have to follow this policy?

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Yes. Anytime you are using the 4-H name or emblem all California State 4-H policies apply, including this water policy.

11. How much water does a person need?

It depends. There are many factors that will impact the needs of any person. Heat, level of activity, consumption of salty foods and humidity levels would all make a difference. As a general rule, water should be the first beverage of choice when thirsty. Signs of dehydration include thirst, headaches, fatigue and infrequent bathroom use. Provide periodic reminders to drink water to youth who may otherwise be distracted during play to stay hydrated.

12. Where can I find more information about this water policy and resources to implement it?

Visit the California State 4-H website for additional information, at http://4h.ucanr.edu/Projects/HealthyLiving/Water_For_Better_Living/

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