

Special Needs When the Child Is Not Permitted to Take Fluids by Mouth

Infants or children who are unable or not permitted to take fluids by mouth (nothing by mouth [NPO]) have special needs. To ensure that they do not receive fluids, a sign can be placed in some obvious place, such as over their beds or on their shirts, to alert others to the NPO status. To prevent the temptation to drink, fluids should not be left at the bedside.

Oral hygiene, a part of routine hygienic care, is especially important when fluids are restricted or withheld. For young children who cannot brush their teeth or rinse their mouth without swallowing fluid, the mouth and teeth can be cleaned and kept moist by swabbing with saline-moistened gauze.

Nursing Tip

To keep the mouth feeling moist when the child is not permitted to take fluids by mouth, give ice chips (if this is permitted by the practitioner) or spray the mouth from an atomizer. To meet the need to suck, infants are provided with a safe commercial pacifier.

The child who is fluid restricted presents an equal challenge. Limiting fluids is often more difficult for the child than being NPO, especially when IV fluids are also eliminated. To make certain the child does not drink the entire amount allowed early in the day, the daily allotment is calculated to provide fluids at periodic intervals throughout the child's waking hours. Serving the fluids in small containers gives the illusion of larger servings. No extra liquid is left at the bedside.

Parenteral Fluid Therapy

Site and Equipment

The site selected for PIV infusion depends on accessibility and convenience. Although it is possible to use any accessible in older children, the child's developmental, cognitive, and mobility needs must be considered when selecting a site. Ideally, in older children, the superficial veins of the forearm should be used, leaving the hands free. An older child can help select the site and thereby