

# Children and water

Millions of children around the world suffer because they don't have access to safe water and sanitation. Living without these vital services has a devastating impact on their health, education and family relationships.

## Water collection

In many countries children, particularly girls, are expected to collect water. Girls as young as ten may take the main responsibility for drawing and carrying the family's water. Carrying heavy water containers over long distances, often three or four miles, is exhausting and can damage children's heads, necks and spines.

## Water-related diseases

Every day thousands of children die from diseases associated with unsafe water and sanitation. Most are under the age of five. Other diseases related to water and sanitation include parasitic infections, that can slow children's learning potential; trachoma, which can lead to blindness; and the skin disease scabies.

## Effect on education

Many children are frequently absent from school because they are collecting water or they are sick with water-related diseases. Where there are no private sanitation facilities at school, girls often drop out completely when they reach puberty.



Seven year old Okwi collecting water from a WaterAid water point in Katakwi, Uganda.



In Konso, Ethiopia, girls start collecting water at the age of four or five. It's common for girls to spend all day collecting water, making several trips that each take two or three hours.

## Meeting children's needs

WaterAid works to ensure that our programs respond to children's needs. Often new water sources are located in the center of the community to minimize the distance everybody needs to carry water. We check that latrines are designed so they are appropriate for use by children.

# Water-related diseases are a leading cause of infant mortality.

## Hygiene ambassadors

Children are quick to learn and often act as ambassadors of good hygiene within their families. We work with schools to run classes, games and clubs that promote hygiene practices such as regular handwashing.

## Improving nutrition

When families gain access to a safe water supply, it is easier to grow and cook food so children are given more regular and more varied meals. This, coupled with reduced incidences of diarrheal diseases, helps reduce malnutrition, so children can become healthier.

## Improving education

As children become healthier, they can concentrate better and their performance at school improves. It is also easier to recruit good teachers to work in schools with water and sanitation facilities.

## Transforming lives

Providing children with clean and accessible water and toilet facilities changes their lives. Their health improves and they have more time to go to school, spend time with their families and to simply play.

Go to [wateraidamerica.org](http://wateraidamerica.org)



Providing soap and hygiene promotion can reduce cases of diarrhea by more than half.



Children outside a school restroom block in Tienfala, Mali.



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