



Hydration

The battle begins to remain sufficiently hydrated from birth until death to sustain optimal vitality, wellness, and good health.

Why is it so important to stay hydrated?

The body depends on water for survival. Water makes up more than half the body weight. Every cell, tissue, and organ in the body needs water to function correctly. The body uses water to maintain its temperature, remove waste and lubricate joints.

How does the body lose water?

Through restroom breaks, sweat, breathing, warm weather, exercise, and fevers, the body loses water. If not replaced, dehydration occurs. Vomiting and diarrhea can also lead to rapid fluid loss.

Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Little or no urine, or urine that is darker than usual
- Dry mouth
- Sleepiness or fatigue
- Extreme thirst
- Headache
- Confusion
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- No tears when crying

Actively prevent dehydration by drinking plenty of water. Do not wait until the symptoms appear. Dehydration is hard to recognize, especially with aging.

How do hydrate properly?

There are different recommendations for water intake each day. 6 to 8 8-ounce glasses of water was the recommended amount, which is a reasonable goal. However, different people need different amounts of water to stay hydrated. Most healthy people can stay well hydrated by drinking water and other fluids whenever they feel thirsty. The current suggestion is one ounce of water for every two pounds of body weight.

Some people are at higher risk of dehydration, including those who exercise, have certain medical conditions, are sick, or cannot get enough fluids during the day. Older adults are also at higher risk—the brain's ability to sense dehydration and send signals for thirst diminishes with age.

Check the urine if concerned about drinking enough water. Light yellow urine suggests improper hydration. Increase water intake if:

- Have certain medical conditions, such as kidney stones or bladder infection
- Pregnant or breastfeeding
- Outside during hot weather
- Exercising
- Have a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Trying to lose weight

Other forms of hydration?

Water is the best option for staying hydrated. Other drinks and foods can provide water but may add extra calories from sugar to the diet. Drinks like fruit and vegetable juices, milk, and herbal teas can contribute to hydrating the body. Even caffeinated drinks, such as coffee, tea, and soda, count toward daily water intake up to a point. However, it is best to limit these since caffeine may cause some to urinate more frequently or feel anxious or jittery. A moderate amount of caffeine, 200 to 300 milligrams (about the amount in 2 to 4 8-ounce cups of coffee), is not harmful to most people.

Fruits and vegetables contain water, such as watermelon, tomatoes, lettuce, and soup broths.

What about sports drinks?

For most people, water is all that is needed to maintain good hydration. However, high-intensity exercise for longer than an hour, a sports drink may be helpful because it contains carbohydrates that can prevent low blood

sugar. A sports drink can also help replace electrolytes lost during strenuous exercise.

Choose sports drinks wisely, as they are often high in calories from sugar and contain high sodium levels. If choosing a sports drink that contains caffeine, be careful not to get too much caffeine in the diet.

Sports drinks are not the same as energy drinks. Energy drinks usually contain large amounts of caffeine and other stimulants (for example, guarana or taurine) that your body does not need. Most of these drinks are also high in sugar. Many experts recommend that kids and teens should not have energy drinks.

Tips for staying hydrated

Always carry a bottle of water during the day. Consider carrying a reusable water bottle and filling it from the tap rather than purchasing bottled water, which is expensive and creates plastic bottle waste.

If plain water is not attractive, try adding a slice of lemon or lime to the drink. If exercising, drink water before, during, and after a workout. Start and end the day with a glass of water.

When hungry, drink water. The sensation of thirst is often confused with hunger. True hunger will not be satisfied by drinking water. Drinking water may also contribute to a healthy weight loss plan, as some research suggests that drinking water will help.

Drink on a schedule when waking, at breakfast, lunch, dinner, and bedtime. Alternatively, drink a small glass of water at the top of each hour.

Drink water when at a restaurant; it is free!