

Creating Health & Nutrition Fact Sheets

How Much Water Should I Drink?

Don't like to drink water? Good news! There are lots of ways to meet your fluid needs besides just water.

Nutrition Information

- The human body is made up of 50 to 75 percent water, or about 10 to 12 gallons.
- Water is a necessary nutrient. It is critical for good health.
- Replenishing your body's water supply is crucial for survival and well-being.

Water is needed in almost every bodily function and by all organs. Here are some things water does:

- Moves nutrients into our cells
- Helps to digest our food
- Hydrates (fills with water) our cells and prevents dehydration
- Flushes out the toxins (poisons) made from many reactions in our body

Water, Water Everywhere



The average adult loses about 2½ quarts, or 10 cups, of water daily. To maintain your body's fluid balance, you need to replace it each day.

How Much Water Do I Need Each Day?

Recommendations for how much fluid we need each day changed in 2004 upon publication of a report by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science. The report showed that most healthy adults take in enough fluids and are adequately hydrated. They get fluid (water) from both beverages and food, not just plain water.

Tip

Drink water before and after exercise to avoid dehydration.

All fluids like juice, tea, soup, and even coffee and alcoholic beverages count. About 80 percent of people's daily water intake comes from drinking water and other beverages—including drinks with caffeine. The other 20 percent comes from water contained in food.

General Water Recommendations

- Approximately 11 cups of total fluid for women
- Approximately 16 cups of total fluid for men

Is It Possible to Drink Too Much Water?

Yes, it is possible to drink too much water. But, for most people, the greater concern is not getting enough fluids.

Most people need 8 to 12 cups of water daily. Certain medications, high-fiber intake, and age can further boost your need for water. Seniors need more water because aging bodies do not concentrate urine as well. Many are not as able to detect thirst well and therefore drink less.

Also, people living in hotter or colder climates may need more fluids. Extreme temperatures demand more fluids to keep the body temperature normal. Fluid needs also rise with increased physical activity. Drink 1 to 3 more cups per hour as you increase the intensity and duration of your activity.

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How Do I Know If I'm Getting Enough Fluids?

Follow your natural thirst and hunger mechanisms. If you feel thirsty, then drink more water. Drink more if you are exercising or have special needs (as noted above). Another way to know if you are drinking enough water is to pay attention to the color of your urine. Your urine should be very pale or colorless and odorless (except for the first time

urinating after waking up). Watch for symptoms of dehydration, including dry mouth, fatigue, constipation, and decreased appetite. More severe symptoms are dizziness, elevated temperature, confusion, and lower blood pressure. Contact your health care provider if you are feeling these severe symptoms and drink more water.

Prepared by Katherine French, extension educator, Mercer County.

Sources: American Dietetic Association website, www.eatright.org.

Health & Nutrition Letter, Tufts University, April 2004.

extension.psu.edu

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Need More Fluids?

Tips for Increasing Your Water Intake

- Carry water with you everywhere you go—the car, office, and anywhere. Before long, you'll find yourself reaching for it without a second thought.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables. They are naturally high in water content.
- Try drinking lemon-flavored hot water or tea for a change.
- Try flavored, calorie-free waters or add a few drops of lemon or lime juice.
- At a restaurant, ask for water with lemon. Fat-free milk, unsweetened tea, coffee, or other drinks without added sugars can also be good choices.