

## Hydration/Water Consumption

### WATER IS ESSENTIAL TO GOOD HEALTH— ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH?

How much water should you drink each day? It's a simple question with no easy answer. Your individual water needs depend on many factors, including your health, age, type and level of activity, heat, and humidity.



No single formula fits everyone. But knowing more about your body's need for fluids (*hydration*) will help you estimate how much water to drink each day.

### WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF WATER?

Water is your body's principal chemical component and makes up about 50–80 percent of our body weight, depending on our age, how much fat we are carrying in our body, and whether we are male or female. Your body depends on water to survive.

Every cell, tissue, and organ in your body needs water to work properly. For example, water:

- Gets rid of waste through urination, perspiration, and bowel movements.
- Helps regulate your body temperature.
- Lubricates joints.
- Cushions brain, spinal cord, growing fetus.
- Protects sensitive tissues.
- Forms the bulk of blood and lymph fluids.
- Metabolizes carbohydrates and proteins for our nutrition.

### HOW MUCH WATER DO YOU NEED?

Every day you lose water through your breath, perspiration, urine, and bowel movements. For your body to function properly, you must replenish its water supply by consuming beverages and foods that contain water.

So how much fluid does the average, healthy adult living in a temperate climate need? The U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine determined that an adequate daily fluid intake is:

- About 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluids a day for men.
- About 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) of fluids a day for women.

These recommendations cover fluids from water, other beverages, and food. About 20 percent of daily fluid intake usually comes from food and the rest from drinking.

## WHAT ABOUT THE ADVICE TO DRINK 8 GLASSES A DAY?

You’ve probably heard the adage to drink eight glasses of water a day. That’s easy to remember, and it’s a reasonable goal. Most healthy people can stay hydrated by drinking water and other fluids whenever they feel thirsty. For some people, fewer than eight glasses a day might be enough. But other people might need more.

Lack of water can lead to **dehydration** — a condition that occurs when you don’t have enough water in your body to carry out normal functions. Even mild dehydration can drain your energy and make you tired. Severe dehydration can lead to death.

## WHAT ARE SOME SYMPTOMS OF DEHYDRATION?

- Reduced urine output
- Darker color urine
- Drowsiness and lethargy
- Lightheadedness
- Extreme thirst
- Headache
- Confusion
- No tears when crying
- Fast heart rate



## YOU MAY NEED TO MODIFY YOUR TOTAL FLUID INTAKE BASED ON SEVERAL FACTORS:

- **Exercise.** If you do any activity that makes you sweat, you need to drink extra water to cover the fluid loss. It’s important to drink water before, during, and after a workout.
- **Environment.** Hot or humid weather can make you sweat and requires additional fluid. Dehydration can also occur at high altitudes.
- **Overall health.** Your body loses fluids when you have a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea. Drink more water or follow a doctor’s recommendation to drink oral rehydration solutions. Other conditions that might require increased fluid intake include bladder infections and urinary tract stones.
- **Pregnancy and breast-feeding.** If you are pregnant or breast-feeding, you may need additional fluids to stay hydrated.

## IS WATER THE ONLY OPTION FOR STAYING HYDRATED?

No. You don't need to only rely on water to meet your fluid needs. What you eat also provides a significant portion. For example, many fruits and vegetables, such as watermelon and spinach, are almost 100 percent water by weight.

In addition, beverages like milk, juice, and herbal teas are mostly water. Even caffeinated drinks — such as coffee, tea, and soda — can contribute to your daily water intake. But go easy on sugar-sweetened drinks. Regular soda, energy or sports drinks, and other sweet drinks usually contain a lot of added sugar, which may provide more calories than needed.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M DRINKING ENOUGH?

Your fluid intake is probably adequate if:

- You rarely feel thirsty.
- Your urine is colorless or light yellow.

Your doctor or dietitian can help you determine the amount of water that's right for you every day.

To prevent dehydration and make sure your body has the fluids it needs, make water your choice of beverage. It's a good idea to drink a glass of water:

- With each meal and between meals.
- Before, during, and after exercise.
- If you feel thirsty.

## SHOULD I WORRY ABOUT DRINKING TOO MUCH WATER?

Drinking too much water is rarely a problem for healthy, well-nourished adults. Athletes may sometimes drink too much water to prevent dehydration during long or intense exercise. When you drink too much water, your kidneys can't get rid of the excess water. The sodium content of your blood becomes diluted. This is called **hyponatremia**, and it can be life-threatening.

## WHAT IF I DON'T REALLY LIKE WATER, AND I FORGET TO DRINK IT?

- Consider alternatives to plain water, such as flavored water, herbal tea, a slice of lemon or lime, and others.
- Keep a convenient, reusable water bottle with you during the day and refill it often.
- Develop a habit of getting your daily water intake by the end of each day, like brushing your teeth.
- Drink water on a schedule. For a 150-pound healthy person it might look like 12 ounces with breakfast, mid-morning, lunch, mid-afternoon, dinner, and evening snack.

- Sometimes thirst is perceived as hunger. When you're feeling hungry, drink water first. True hunger will not be satisfied by drinking water.

## **RESOURCES**

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/water/art-20044256>

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/water/>

[https://sparck.nationalacademies.org/vivisimo/cgi-bin/query-meta?query=How+much+water+does+a+person+need+daily&v%3Aproject=uweb\\_proj\\_ext](https://sparck.nationalacademies.org/vivisimo/cgi-bin/query-meta?query=How+much+water+does+a+person+need+daily&v%3Aproject=uweb_proj_ext)

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/the-importance-of-hydration>

<https://familydoctor.org/hydration-why-its-so-important>