

HYDRATION AND YOUR HEALTH

Nutrition News You Can Use



Learn how to stay properly hydrated to keep your body healthy

Staying hydrated is an essential part of staying healthy. Water accounts for almost two thirds of our body weight. It enables our most important body functions. If you're not drinking enough, you can quickly become dehydrated, which can lead to headache, fatigue and more serious issues. Staying hydrated can help you stay energized, active and healthy.

Most people know they need to drink in hot weather or after exercising, but staying properly hydrated is important all year long, and is just as important for the average person as it is for serious athletes. For healthy hydration, the trick is understanding what to drink, how much is enough, and when an extra glass can do you good.

Healthy Hydration Choices

Any non-alcoholic beverage can help you stay hydrated. Water, soda, sports drinks, fruit juices, coffee and tea can all help you maintain healthy hydration. However, it is very important to remember that low calorie or zero calorie beverages are usually the best choice. Sweetened beverages can be high in calories and low in nutrients. So while a sweetened drink is OK as an occasional part of your diet, too many can lead to weight gain and other health issues. Use the following as a guide to stay hydrated without adding extra pounds:

| Choose: | Limit: |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| water & other unsweetened beverages | sweetened beverages |
| skim milk | whole milk |
| 100% juice | fruit drinks / punch |

How Much is Enough?

There are many expert opinions about how much people should drink each day, but generally about 9 to 12 glasses of water and

other beverages is recommended for most adults. Specific recommendations vary based on your level of activity, the temperature where you live, and your personal medical history. It's important to adjust the amount you drink to your routine and environment. When you are more active or in very hot or cold environments you should drink more. For every hour of strenuous activity, experts recommend adding an extra 18 to 36 ounces to help offset the amount of water lost. The old "8 glasses a day" advice is a good starting point, but it's important to adjust the amount you drink to your personal lifestyle.

Tips for Getting Enough

- Fill your glass from a container that holds at least 64 ounces of water. Drink at least one full container every day.
- Drink a glass of water or other beverage with every meal and every snack.
- Drink a glass of water in between each meal.
- Keep a log of your drinks for a week to see if you're getting enough.
- Carry a water bottle with you on-the-go.
- Add fresh lemon or lime to your water since studies show that people drink more water when it's flavored, even without added sugar.
- Include more fresh fruits and vegetables in your diet, they contain lots of water, and up to twenty percent of your fluid intake comes from the food you eat.
- Begin and end your day with water. Drink a glass when you wake up and a glass before you go to sleep.

Don't Wait Until You're Thirsty!

Experts advise that if you wait until you're very thirsty, you may already be dehydrated. So drink enough water and other fluids throughout the day, every day, to stay hydrated and to keep your body working normally.



Our dietitians receive hundreds of questions each year about a wide variety of nutrition topics. Their timely and trustworthy insights and ideas can help you and your family live healthier lives.



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Avoid dehydration by drinking a glass of water 30 minutes before you exercise, then drink another half glass every 15-20 minutes during your work out.

Water and Weight Management

Water may also help you manage your weight because it can help you feel full. So for many people, drinking more water has the added benefit of cutting calories. Water can take the place of other high calorie beverages and also reduce the cravings you have for unhealthy snacks throughout the day.

The Great Debate: Bottled versus Tap

Bottled and tap water are both healthy and safe to drink, so it's all a matter of preference. Some prefer the taste and convenience of bottled water. Others think tap water is just fine and love the fact that it's free. Choose whichever will help you drink enough each day. If your tap water at home has a flavor you don't like, try filtered water pitchers or install filters onto your faucets. If you drink bottled water, please don't forget to think of the environment and recycle!

There are so many types of bottled water that it's sometimes confusing to tell the difference. All of the following are great hydration choices:

- Mineral Water: Water that comes from protected underground sources that contain minerals naturally.
- Purified Water: Water that goes through a distillation process to remove impurities.
- Sparkling Water: Water that is carbonated to add "fizz".
- Spring Water: Water collected from a naturally flowing spring.

The Scoop on Specialty Beverages:

Sports Drinks: When you exercise more rigorously, for periods of more than an hour, sports drinks can be helpful. They contain carbohydrates, sodium and other electrolytes that help replenish your muscle strength and replace minerals lost as you sweat. However, they can also add calories to your diet so limit sports drinks if you're not a serious athlete. Healthy hydration during your workout is one of

the most important things you can do for your performance and health.

Nutrient added waters: As you look for healthy hydration options, nutrient added waters are a big trend. These beverages add tropical fruit and exotic berry flavors to water, and then add extra vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and even medicinal herbs. While these are a tasty way to hydrate and add some extra nutrients, make sure that you don't rely on these types of drinks as your main source of vitamins. Many contain extra calories and will never replace the health benefits of a balanced diet. Including them occasionally however can be a great addition to a healthy hydration plan.

Coffee, Tea and Energy Drinks: Most energy drinks provide both carbs and caffeine. Energy drinks do help you stay hydrated. However they also add calories to your diet and sometimes contain more caffeine than 2-3 cups of coffee. While caffeine can offset some of the hydration benefits from energy drinks, coffee or tea, experts report that there are still benefits from drinking caffeinated beverages. So an energy drink or a cup of coffee or tea can be part of your healthy hydration plan. But don't overdo the caffeine and remember that water and low calorie beverages should satisfy most of your daily hydration needs.

Can I Drink Too Much Water?

Although not very common, it is possible to drink too much water. Drinking too much water can dilute the sodium in your blood which can result in a dangerous condition. This is rare and when it does occur it is usually seen in marathon runners or endurance athletes, or other people who consume large amounts of water in a short period of time. Generally however, drinking water is a great choice and trading up to a sports drink with added electrolytes is a good idea during long periods of intense exercise.

While sticking to a healthy diet can sometimes be a challenge for all of us, staying hydrated is an easy step you can take towards good health.



Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your doctor and a registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.