



ASK THE DIETITIAN

Healthy Hydration

Q. I do not like the taste of water, any advice on how I can still get my 8 glasses a day?

A. First of all, you actually need more than 8 glasses of fluid per day; the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences recommends 9-12. Water is the best option for hydration because it is naturally calorie free and is readily available and inexpensive. If you don't like the taste of plain water, try adding a squeeze of lemon or lime to give it some flavor or mix it with a little 100% fruit juice. You can also dress up your water by adding sugar-free flavor packets. Also remember other beverages like coffee, tea, milk, juice, and even diet soda can count towards your daily fluid intake. However, you should limit beverages that are sweetened or contain a lot of calories because the excess calories can lead to weight gain. Try to drink water most often, include lots of fruits and veggies in your diet, and choose unsweetened or low calorie beverages and you should have no problem getting enough fluid daily.

Q. Why is water so important for good health?

A. Your body is made up of mostly water and nearly every organ relies on it to work properly. We lose water constantly through urination, sweating, and even breathing which is why it is important to replenish your fluids. Water is necessary for absorbing and transporting nutrients to your cells. Your muscles are made up of 70-75% water so it is needed to keep them working properly. Joints need water for cushioning and lubrication. Water also aids in digestion, keeps your brain functioning normally, and keeps your skin hydrated. Your kidneys need water to remove waste and toxins and the right amount of fluid helps your heart regulate blood pressure. When dehydrated, your organs have to work harder which over time could lead to health problems. Keep your body hydrated and healthy by drinking at least 9-12 glasses of water each day.

Q. I am trying to lose weight; will drinking more water help me do this?

A. Water can help you to feel fuller and control cravings allowing you to eat fewer calories overall. Eating fewer calories is what ultimately helps you lose weight. If you substitute water for beverages that contain calories, you can cut your calories even more. Making water a part of your weight loss plan is a good idea and will also help keep you properly hydrated.

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

Q. I workout daily, should I be drinking a sports drink or is water good enough?

A. It all depends on how long you are working out. If you are working out for less than an hour at a low or moderate intensity, water is the best choice for staying hydrated. If you do an intense workout for longer than an hour you may want to try a sports drink. Sports drinks contain glucose and electrolytes and may help prevent fatigue and replenish muscles during long/intense exercise. For moderate exercise, experts recommend drinking 8-12 ounces of water 2 hours before and again 30 minutes after your workout. During your workout drink 3-6 ounces of water every 15-20 minutes.

Q. Won't drinking more water make me bloated?

A. Bloating occurs because of abdominal gas therefore it is a misconception that drinking water will cause bloating. Some people erroneously describe water retention caused by certain medical conditions as bloating. Others have used bloating to describe the feeling of fullness that can occur if you drink too much water too quickly. To avoid that uncomfortable feeling of fullness spread out your fluid intake throughout of the day. Drinking enough water will make sure that you are properly hydrated and will keep your body functioning normally.

Q. I often feel thirsty and fatigued; does this mean I am dehydrated, what should I do?

A. Thirst and fatigue are just a couple of the many signs and symptoms of dehydration. Others include dark urine, flushed face, dizziness, headaches, and dry mouth. If you are not drinking enough fluids, at least 9-12 glasses a day, increase your intake. While better hydration is a great step, if you're regularly experiencing any of these symptoms, make sure you check with your doctor to see if your thirst and fatigue are being caused by another health issue.

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A. Research shows that drinks with caffeine may have the effect of mildly increasing the volume of fluid to be excreted; however this effect is minor, especially in people who drink caffeinated beverages on a regular basis. Therefore, these drinks do contribute to hydration but try to make them a smaller portion of your intake and get most of your fluids from water.

Q. What foods should I eat to help get enough water in my diet?

A. Foods that are made up of mostly water like fresh fruits and vegetables are great choices. Not only will they help meet your fluid needs, they also contain health promoting nutrients. Here are some healthy fruits and vegetables that are also high in water content:

Food	% Water
Cucumber	96
Celery	95
Zucchini	95
Tomato	94
Watermelon	92
Broccoli	91
Carrots	87
Blueberries	85
Apple	84
Banana	74

Although these foods provide some water in your diet, only about 20% of your daily fluid intake is met through foods, so be sure to drink 9-12 glass of water and other beverages each day.

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Q. I know adults need about 9-12 glasses of water per day but what about children?

A. Children are more susceptible to dehydration so it is important to make sure they are drinking enough fluids, especially when they are active outdoors or in the heat. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences recommends that children ages 1-3 get 4 cups of fluid, ages 4-8 get 5 cups of fluid, ages 9-18 get 8 cups of fluid, from water and other beverages. Children usually will drink more fluid if it is flavored so try mixing water with ¼ cup of 100% juice. Try to stay away from sugary beverages like sweetened carbonated beverages, fruit drinks and punch.

Q. Do I still need as much liquid during the winter or in cold weather?

A. Since the usual warning signs of perspiration or thirst are not as evident in the cold weather, there is a tendency to drink less fluid, therefore there is risk of dehydration. It's important to step up your efforts to stay hydrated during the colder months.

Q. Do I need as much liquid in higher altitudes?

A. Thin air and low humidity at higher elevations contribute to fluid loss. You lose fluid from exhaled air since you breathe more frequently when the air is thin and the low humidity causes fluid loss through your skin. Therefore it's important to drink enough fluid to stay hydrated.

Q. I drink water constantly throughout the day, is it possible to get too much?

A. Although it is possible to drink too much water, it is unlikely you are getting too much. If you are healthy, your kidneys will be able to regulate the fluid in your body and get rid of what you don't need. There are rare cases of people drinking too much water. This is usually only seen in marathon runners who drink large amounts of water and do not replace electrolytes properly. This happens because extreme amounts of water in a short period of time can lead to dilution of important electrolytes like sodium in the body. However this is rare and drinking water throughout the day is the best way to stay hydrated.

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Q. I am usually not thirsty that much during the day; do I still need to drink as much water?

A. If you aren't thirsty and your urine is clear or pale yellow, you probably are already getting enough fluid whether it is from water, other beverages, or foods. If your urine is dark yellow that can mean you are not drinking enough and need to increase your water intake even if you aren't thirsty. Aim to get 9-12 glasses of fluids a day, mainly from water.

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