

The Importance of Good Hydration

Humans lose water throughout the day via breathing, perspiration, urine and bowel movements.

As little as a 2 percent reduction in hydration begins to impair every physiological function. In order for the body to function optimally, this water needs to be replaced by drinking fluids and eating foods that contain water.

Why is water important?

Water plays a crucial role in every physiological function of the body. It helps flush toxins out of vital organs and carries nutrients from food to cells for energy.

Water also regulates hormones, body temperature and the digestive process (preventing constipation).

Joints, skin and internal organs depend on water to function properly.

Proper Hydration

When someone is properly hydrated, their urine should be clear and relatively odor-free. Dark yellow or cloudy urine is often a sign of dehydration.

Another sign of dehydration is thirst. If a person drinks water only when thirsty, they may not be drinking enough.

Additional signs of dehydration include:

- Dry mouth
- Headaches
- Muscle cramps
- Fatigue
- Inability to concentrate
- Dizziness
- Nausea.

How Much to Drink

How much water a person needs to drink per day depends on several factors, including:

- Exercise
- Environment
- Injury

- Illness
- Pregnancy or breastfeeding.

In addition, food contributes roughly 20 percent to overall hydration needs, with raw fruits and vegetables giving our bodies the most water. Although specific recommendations vary among organizations, it is generally accepted that if an adult consumes 6-8 cups of water daily, in addition to a normal diet, this satisfies hydration needs.

Instances where more water may need to be consumed include:

- Before, during and after exercise
- Exercising in hot weather
- If ill or injured
- During pregnancy or breastfeeding.

Sports drinks that contain sodium and potassium (electrolytes) are generally only necessary when exercising vigorously for an hour or longer. Also, beware of the high caloric count in sports drinks. Even drinks that claim to have 10 calories per serving often have two to three servings per bottle.

While caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea and soda do count toward hydration, water is still the best choice because it is a stimulant and calorie-free.

Ways to Increase Daily Water Intake

- Carry a large water bottle, and drink from it throughout the day.
- Drink a full glass of water with each meal or snack.
- Drink a full glass of water whenever taking medication.
- Drink water before, during and after exercise.
- Drink milk or orange juice as a healthy snack.
- Add a slice of lemon or lime or a handful of raspberries to water to add a little flavor.
- When drinking alcohol, alternate every alcoholic beverage with a glass of sparkling water.
- When drinking juice, fill half of the glass with juice, and top it off with water.

Resources

- National Institutes of Health: www.nih.gov
- Nutrition.gov: www.nutrition.gov
- President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition: www.fitness.gov
- Administration on Aging: www.acl.gov

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-5465

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