

August Monthly Newsletter



Wonderful Water...

I am often asked “how much water should I drink each day?” Unfortunately this is not a simple question to answer. An individual’s water needs depend on many factors, including your health, how active you are and where you live. There isn’t a calculation that fits everyone’s needs. Read on to find out about your bodies need for fluid and how to estimate your own needs.

Health benefits of water

Water is the bodies’ principal chemical component, making up, on average, 60 – 75 percent of your body weight. Every system in your body depends on water such as all of the biochemical reactions and metabolic processes. Water flushes toxins out of vital organs, carries nutrients to your cells and provides a moist environment for ear, nose and throat tissues. The body does not function optimally or efficiently when it is not well hydrated. It helps lubricate joints, protect organs, and maintain normal body temperature. A well hydrated body is necessary for optimal exercise, athletic performance and overall wellbeing.

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.

Water Losses

On average, your body losses water through your breath, perspiration, urine and bowel movements. In order to function properly this water supply must be replenished through a combination of food and fluids. Water loss is increased by several other factors such as:

- exercise
- hot / humid weather
- altitude > 8,200 feet or 2,500 metres
- illness or health conditions
- pregnancy or breast-feeding

How much water do you need?

Replacement approach. The average urine output for adults is about 1.5 litres a day. The average adult will lose close to an additional litre of water a day through breathing, sweating and bowel movements. Food usually accounts for 20 percent of your total fluid intake. Therefore if one consumes 2 Litres of water or other beverages a day (8 cups) along with the normal diet, you will most likely be balancing the fluid lost with the fluid replaced. Another basic approach is to drink enough fluid so that you rarely feel thirsty and produce 1.5 liters (6.3 cups) or more of colorless urine.

Other sources of water

Although it's a great idea to keep water within reach at all times, you don't need to rely only on what you drink to satisfy your fluid needs. What you eat also provides a significant portion of your fluid needs. On average, food provides about 20 percent of total water intake, while the remaining 80 percent comes from water and beverages of all kinds.

For example, many fruits and vegetables, such as watermelon and tomatoes, are 90 percent to 100 percent water by weight. Beverages such as milk and juice also are composed mostly of water. Even beer, wine and caffeinated beverages — such as coffee, tea or soda — can contribute, but these should not be a major portion of your daily total fluid intake. Water is one of your best bets because it's calorie-free, inexpensive and readily available.

Staying safely hydrated

It's generally not a good idea to use thirst alone as a guide for when to drink. By the time you become thirsty, you are most likely slightly dehydrated. Further, as you get older your body is less able to sense dehydration and send your brain signals of thirst.

To ward off dehydration and make sure your body has the fluids it needs, make water your beverage of choice. Healthy adults should consider the following tips for increasing your water consumption:

- Drink a glass of water with each meal and between each meal.
- Hydrate before, during and after exercise.
- Substitute sparkling water for alcoholic drinks at social gatherings
- Keep a large (clear) water bottle on your desk at work

- Keep a pitcher of water in your frig at home
- Always carry a water bottle with you when away from work or home
- Order water when out at a restaurant
- Add lemon or lime to your water.

If you're concerned about your fluid intake, check with your doctor or a registered dietitian. He or she can help you determine the amount of water that's best for you.

The Vitamin Water Craze

Vitamin water is fortified with various vitamins and other additives, some include sweeteners for example. If you are eating a balanced diet or taking a multivitamin, you most likely will not be benefiting from this expensive alternative.

As mentioned some vitamin waters do contain sweeteners and therefore added calories. Therefore if you are trying to lose weight, non-caloric plain water would be the better choice! In addition if you have a health condition such as heart or kidney disease, the potassium in some types of vitamin water may be a concern. Too much potassium can interrupt your heart or kidney function.

Remember, fruits, vegetables and other whole foods are the best sources of vitamins and minerals. Of course, water is important, too. If you don't care for plain water, try sparkling water or a squirt of lemon or cranberry juice in your water to add to the taste!

Information for this article can be found at www.mayoclinic.com