

Drink before you get thirsty!

Water Balance

Simply put, water is the beverage of life. While you may survive for six weeks without food, you won't live longer than a week or so without water. It's the most abundant substance in the human body as well as the most common substance on earth. An average adult body is 55-75% water (about 10-12 gallons). It's found in every cell, tissue and organ and almost every life sustaining body process needs water to function.

In healthy people, water intake and water loss balance out. If you consume more than you need, your kidneys simply excrete the extra. To see if you're drinking enough fluid, check your urine. If it looks yellow or orange you aren't getting enough fluid. Almost clear urine means you're drinking enough. (Keep in mind that certain B Complex Vitamins can stain your urine, but you still have to count your water intake to see if you are getting enough.)

Drink before you get thirsty!

When you don't consume enough fluids for long enough, your body may trigger a sensation of thirst. Although thirst signals the need for fluids, you actually need fluids long before you become thirsty. This is especially important for seniors, children, and for anyone during illness, hot weather or strenuous physical activity. Waiting until you feel thirsty to drink probably means that you're already deficient by two or more cups of body fluids.

How much is enough?

The average adult loses about 2 quarts (about 10 cups) of water daily through perspiration, urination, bowel movements and breathing. This water needs to be replaced because the body doesn't store an extra supply. How much water the body needs depends on the amount of calories used as well as body weight, level of physical activity, diet, exposure to dry air, pregnancy and illness. If you are trying to lose weight or stop smoking you need to drink about twice as much, to flush the fat and toxins out of your system.

To keep your body well hydrated, drink 8 to 12 cups of water throughout the day. Milk, juice and other beverages do NOT count toward your daily water intake. Caffeinated and alcoholic beverages are not the good sources of fluid since caffeine and alcohol are diuretics, causing the body to lose water through increased urination.

Water vs. Sports Drinks

Sports drinks are an excellent choice for people who are engaged in physical activity lasting over 90 minutes. These products contain sugars, sodium, potassium and other nutrients that are lost during strenuous physical activity. If you exercise less than 90 minutes, plain water is best to replenish body fluids.

Tips to increase your water intake:

- Invest in a 32-ounce sports bottle. Fill it with water and keep it handy throughout the day. Drink at least two of these each day.

- Do NOT drink water your meals and snacks. That only dilutes the digestive juices and causes undigested food to enter your colon, causing bloating, gas and putrefication.
- Before, during and after any physical activity, drink water, especially in hot weather. Consume 4 to 8 ounces of water every 15 to 20 minutes while you exercise. Don't wait until you feel thirsty.
- Add a lemon, lime slice to jazz up and alkalize your glass of water.
- Make your own sports drink by adding 'Emergen-C' to your water to get more minerals, electrolytes and vitamin C in your day.