

Water

Drinking More Water

Of all compounds essential to the human body, water is the most important. Your body is more than 60 percent water. When you drink enough, your body maintains normal fluid levels throughout. Drinking eight glasses, or two quarts, of water each day is necessary for optimal metabolism. It also keeps your urinary tract healthy and prevents constipation.

Don't Wait Till You're Thirsty

It's important to drink water whether you feel thirsty or not. Don't cut down on water when you're trying to lose weight. Water has no calories and actually helps burn calories. When you're retaining fluids, increasing water intake will help you to eliminate the excess. Water can also be useful when you're trying to lose weight because sometimes we confuse signals of thirst for signals of hunger.

Water helps regulate body temperature, especially during exercise. When you exercise, you lose water through your breath and by sweating. As the sweat evaporates, your body cools. Replenishing water loss during exercise is crucial for physical performance and good health. Too much water loss will increase your risk of heat exhaustion. In addition to your normal six to eight glasses of water each day, drink a glass before you exercise. Then, for each 20 minutes of exercise, drink another cup or more. Be sure to drink a cup or two after you finish.

Beverages other than water can also be used to supply the body with necessary fluids. But be aware that if you drink juices, pops, and milk to quench your thirst, you're getting extra calories. Don't count on caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, since they actually cause the body to become dehydrated.

Tips for Staying Hydrated

- Keep sport bottles full of water handy—at your work area, your bedside, near the television.
- Carry a sports bottle in your backpack, purse, or brief case.
- For each trip to the coffee area, take away two beverages—a cup of brew and a glass of water.
- Eat foods that are high in water content, especially fresh fruits and vegetables.
- If you feel like having a soft drink, try a flavored, unsweetened seltzer water. They're free of calories and caffeine—and they quench your thirst better than diet sodas.
- When you feel like snacking, have a glass of water first. Then wait a few minutes before deciding to eat. Your hunger may have disappeared.
- Keep a jug of cold water in the fridge. The body most rapidly absorbs water when it's cooled to refrigerator temperature.