

NEW-LIFESTYLES STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOUSM WATER FACTS

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Most of us have heard, at one time or another, the general recommendation to drink about 8 to 12 glasses of water each day for good health. Whether we learned it from a health-conscious parent or read it in a high school health textbook, most of us have safely tucked away this information into our brain for future recall. While we recognize that it is important to drink water, we may have forgotten the reasons why it is both beneficial and necessary.

1. How much water should you drink every day?

Our bodies, on average, are made up of about 60% water. Every system in the human body depends on water to function properly. Because our bodies lose water everyday — mostly through sweating and urination, we need to replenish the water our body needs in order to prevent dehydration.

As a general rule, you need 8 to 12 cups of fluid a day to stay well hydrated. Some will come from the foods that you eat such as fruits and vegetables, but at least 8 cups of water will ensure adequate fluid intake.

You may need to drink more than 8 cups of water a day if you exercise or engage in activity that makes you perspire, if it is a hot summer day, if you live at a higher altitude, if you are pregnant or breast-feeding or if you are suffering from illness that causes fever, diarrhea or vomiting.

Keep in mind that caffeinated beverages and alcohol have dehydrating effects which require you to drink more water to stay hydrated.

2. Why is it so important to stay hydrated?

Without enough fluid to carry on normal body functions, the body quickly becomes dehydrated. While dehydration usually poses a serious health risk only for the very young and the very old, even mild dehydration can cause fatigue, lightheadedness, dry mouth and headaches.

Drink water and other fluids daily to combat dehydration. If you feel thirsty, you are dehydrated — don't wait until you are thirsty to drink water.



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A GLASS OF WATER!**

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It has been said that staying well hydrated can improve the appearance of your skin and can help to reduce inflammation in the body. Water is also a natural appetite suppressant helping us to feel full and aiding in the management of a healthy weight.

3. Can I drink too much water?

Though uncommon among healthy adults, it is possible to drink too much water. If you drink too much water, you can potentially overwhelm your kidneys which can lead to hyponatremia, a condition in which the excess water in your system can alter the normal amount of sodium in your blood.

Distance athletes running marathons or participating in triathlons often consume sports drinks containing sodium along with their water to prevent this potential condition.

4. Is bottled water better for you than tap water?

Researchers in the area of environmental engineering science say that bottled water has no health benefit over tap water. Just as safe to drink as bottled water, tap water is strictly regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and meets high standards the government has put in place to protect our health. Such standards include minimum allowable levels of pathogens — inorganic and organic compounds that may be harmful to human health.

Bottled water also meets similar standards established by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Bottled water has either been purified or distilled. Purified water is not necessarily more pure than tap water; in fact, it could simply be treated tap water that has been bottled.

However, bottled waters usually do not have the taste of chlorine which is used to disinfect tap water. If you do not like the taste of tap water, consider buying a filter like those made by Brita® which reduce the amount of chlorine, copper and lead in the water.

5. How can I easily tell if I am hydrated?

You are well hydrated if you are not thirsty and if you are producing a normal amount of urine that is colorless or slightly yellow in color.

Those who drink water regularly will agree — water is the most refreshing beverage either on a hot summer day when you are outside or on a cold winter day when you are inside and feel dry from the lack of humidity and use of furnaces and fireplaces to warm your home. It is essential for good health, and it costs close to nothing. To this, let's raise a glass of water and drink up! Cheers!

Tips to get your 8 to 12 glasses a day

- Drink 1-2 glasses of water when you get up in the morning to jump-start your day.
- Drink hot water with lemon instead of coffee.
- Keep a bottle of water with you at all times.
- Keep an extra bottle of water in the car.
- Drink a glass of water with every meal and with snacks.
- Keep a pitcher of cold water in your refrigerator at all times.
- Add lemon or lime slices to jazz it up!
- Dilute your fruit juice with 1/2 water.
- Each time you start to reach for a snack, drink a glass of water before giving into your craving.



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