



Drink to Your Health

Water is the most vital nutrient in the body. Although a person can survive several weeks without food, the body cannot live more than a few days without water.

Water constitutes 55-65% of your body weight, and all of your body's cells depend on it. Your blood is 83% water, muscles 75% water, brain 74% water, and your bones 10% water. Water transports nutrients throughout the body via the blood, and eliminates waste by carrying it away from cells. Through sweat, it functions as the body's natural thermostat, maintaining body temperature. Also, water lubricates joints and is essential for digestion and proper organ functioning.

Fluid Requirements

To maintain optimal health, it is important to consume around 12 cups of total fluid daily if you are female and 16 cups if you are male. Please note that **total fluid** includes fluid found in all your foods and beverages. Remember that many foods contain water: fruits and vegetables are 75-95% water; meat, fish and poultry are 50-65% water; and breads are 35% water. Since counting water in foods is impractical, a

good guideline is to aim for around **10 cups of water (or other beverages) daily if you are female and 13 cups if you are male**, since the remaining cups will come from food.

Thirst is the body's natural signal to alert you of its water needs. This system is imperfect, however, because strenuous exercise can alter the body's thirst mechanism. It is a good idea to make a habit of drinking water at regular intervals throughout the day, even if you do not feel thirsty.

An adequate intake is especially important for the physically active who may lose significant amounts of water through sweat. Before, during, and after exercise you should drink several glasses of water. Remember that most of the weight lost during

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an intensive exercise session is fluid, not fat. If you are exercising continuously and intensely for longer than an hour, choose a sports drink which contains 6 to 8% carbohydrate and some electrolytes (sodium and potassium). After one hour, your body needs the extra carbohydrate for energy, and the sodium in the drink enhances fluid consumption and retention.

Tips on Tap

- Have a glass or two of water after drinking beverages containing caffeine, such as coffee, tea, chocolate drinks, and some soft drinks. The caffeine in these fluids acts as a diuretic which dehydrates your body.
- Realize that the recommendation of 10-13 cups (80-100 oz.) of water or other non-caffeinated beverages a day is an average value. Your need for water varies depending on activity level, climate, temperature, and types of food and beverages consumed.
- Drink a glass of water with every meal. Ask for water at restaurants if it is not served.
- Carry a water bottle with you. Drink often while sitting in class and studying in your room.
- Realize that alcohol is not a good beverage choice to hydrate your body. In addition to its intoxicating effects and high caloric value, alcohol acts as a diuretic and causes more frequent urination and fluid loss. This is why you may feel thirsty after consuming alcoholic beverages. Also, be aware that it takes 8 ounces of water to metabolize 1 ounce of alcohol. The morning-after headache is often due to the loss of fluids which the body has used for alcohol metabolism.

It all boils down to this — plain water is the ideal beverage — no calories, inexpensive, and readily available.

For more information on water, please visit www.snac.ucla.edu.



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A FEW FACTS ABOUT WATER

Adequate water consumption is one key to a healthy body. Every living cell in your body depends on it for nourishment, elimination of waste, insulation, and cooling. Unfortunately, many people do not realize the importance of adequate fluid intake.

It is recommended that women consume around 12 cups of total fluid daily and men around 16 cups. Although beverages are generally the best sources of water, high concentrations of water can also be found in solid foods. Fruits and vegetables are 75-95% water, meats 50-65%, and breads 35% water. Since around 20% of fluids come from food, aim for drinking 10 cups of fluid if you are female and 13 cups if you are male.

- Muscle cramps during exercise are frequently the result of too little blood and oxygen circulating to the muscles due to an inadequate intake of fluid. Without fluids, the body cannot produce the sweat necessary for evaporative cooling to lower body temperature. Heat stroke, due to dehydration, is caused by insufficient circulation of blood transporting heat from the muscle to the skin's surface to be dissipated.
- Beverages such as coffee, tea, colas, and chocolate drinks that contain caffeine can actually dehydrate the body. Caffeine and alcohol are diuretics and cause the body to lose more fluids through frequent urination. In fact, within a few hours of drinking a caffeinated beverage, 50% of it will be eliminated out of your body.
- In most situations, plain water is the best thirst quencher. Cool water—about 60°—is best. Not only is it more palatable at this temperature, but it leaves the stomach more rapidly, and is available to the body sooner. Athletes who train intensely and continuously for longer than one hour may benefit from drinking a sports beverage with 4-8% carbohydrate and some electrolytes.



- The main difference between hard and soft water is their mineral content. Hard water contains higher concentrations of calcium and magnesium. Soft water contains more sodium. While many people prefer soft water, some studies indicate that its consumption on a daily basis may increase risks for some individuals with high blood pressure or heart disease. And, soft water more easily dissolves certain metals, like cadmium and lead from pipes, which can be harmful.
- Purification is the process of filtering water through carbon filters or boiling it to remove up to 90% of the impurities, such as gases and bacteria. Hardness and mineral content of water are not affected by water purification. The white residue that is left behind in boiled water is usually from calcium and magnesium deposits.

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TYPES OF WATER

Bottled water has been marketed with countless health claims for years. Many brands of bottled water sold today are not natural mineral water but processed tap water. Listed below are some types of water and the processes that produce them.

Club Soda	Carbonated water to which minerals and mineral salts have been added for taste. The sodium content is frequently higher than plain water.
Distilled Water	The purest of all types of water. It is free from chemicals and minerals because it has been vaporized into steam, leaving impurities behind, then collected again as it recondenses.
Mineral Water	Contains dissolved minerals. In most cases the water is processed tap water with minerals added.
Natural Mineral Water	Contains only minerals naturally present and is usually drawn from a spring.
Seltzer Water	Tap water that has been filtered and carbonated, but with no added salts, preservatives, or flavorings.
Sparkling Water	Can be either tap water carbonated with natural or manufactured carbon dioxide or water drawn from a naturally effervescent source (labeled “naturally sparkling”) with carbon dioxide re-injected into the water during bottling.
Spring Water	Water that comes from a spring, but may be processed before bottling. Most contain various levels of minerals.