

# Drink and be Healthy

The "eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day" advice still holds true.



These days, we have so much to choose from to drink – soda, tea, coffee, juices, and sports, vitamin, and energy drinks. Even though these drinks contain water, you still may not be getting enough fluids, or being hydrated.

Hydration = water. [Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) defines "hydrate" as "To supply water to (a person, for example) in order to restore or maintain fluid balance: "Cold water is the fastest and safest way to hydrate an ordinary athlete." (Jane E. Brody)<sup>1</sup>

While we may drink a lot of fluids, we still might not be getting all the water we need. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) says feeling thirsty means you're already mildly dehydrated – that your body is losing fluids faster than it's taking them in. So it makes sense to drink enough water so you don't get thirsty in the first place.<sup>2</sup>

And then there are the liquids that actually make us lose fluids, like alcoholic beverages or drinks with caffeine that make us urinate more often. So don't count coffee, tea, soda, beer or other alcoholic drinks into the total amount of liquid you need to stay healthy and hydrated.<sup>3</sup>

## The weight of water

Did you know two-thirds of your body weight is water? That means a 120-pound person carries 80 pounds of water.<sup>4</sup>

Everything in the human body depends on water. Your liver, heart, blood, brain, stomach – without water, none of these would work. Our blood is water-based, as are the cells that are the basic building blocks of everything we are.

Scientists say the food we eat is good for about 20 percent of the water our bodies need each day.<sup>5</sup> Even though some foods like tomatoes and watermelon have high amounts of water, you'd still have to eat a whole lot of them every day to get the same amount you'd get from 8 daily glasses of water.

# Sweat: Our bodies' air conditioner

The CDC says when our body temperatures go above normal (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit), our brains send out an alarm. This makes us sweat, which cools us down and protects vital systems like our hearts and brains. Like air conditioners, our bodies have built-in thermostats that help control temperature, and our sweat cools them. Whether it's from physical activity or just the weather, when we get hot, our bodies' air conditioners kick in, and we start to sweat. So we need to drink lots of water.<sup>6</sup>

So how much do you need to drink?

Start with an 8-ounce glass of water with each meal and an 8-ounce glass between each meal. You're already up to 5 glasses a day, more than half of the eight 8-ounce glasses doctors say we need.

## Things you do can affect how much you need to drink

**Exercise** – When you exercise, be sure to drink plenty of water before, during, and after exercise. One way to remember might be to think "2 + 2," which means to start adding to your body's water supply by drinking at least two cups of water two hours before you plan to play, work out or just be in hot weather.

Once you get going, plan to take a break and drink about 10 ounces – that's 10 large gulps – from a water bottle every 15 to 20 minutes while you're exercising. And keep drinking after you finish.<sup>7</sup>Remember: by the time your body says, "Hey! I feel thirsty!" you're already dehydrated.

Fruit and other snacks are another way to keep your body a little cooler. Peaches, oranges, watermelon, and grapes help fill your stomach and top up your water level.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, don't forget that sometimes – like when you're swimming – you may not notice you're sweating. But you are, and you can still get dehydrated, so play it safe. Drink up!

**Sickness** – Your body needs extra water to flush out poisons in your system. More than ever, water is key for this. Your cells need all the help they can get to fight infection and dehydrated cells can't do what they need to do. If someone is throwing up, he or she needs to drink water in small sips every 10 minutes.<sup>9</sup>

**Breast-feeding, pregnancy, or long-term illness** – All these mean big changes for our bodies; changes that can be very stressful. Talk to your doctor, because

dehydration is one of the worst things that can happen to a system that's already working really hard.

### **Signs of Dehydration<sup>10</sup>**

Signs of mild dehydration – treat by drinking liquid in small sips:

- Small amounts of dark yellow pee
- "Dry mouth" and tongue with thick spit
- Weakness
- Lightheadedness
- Headache
- Cramping in the arms and legs
- Deep breathing

Signs of dangerous dehydration – call 911 right away:

- Sunken eyes
- Very fast pulse and breathing
- Fainting
- Being cranky
- Cold hands and feet
- No energy
- Coma
- Dry eyes (no tears)

Material for this article was gathered from various sources including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), The Mayo Clinic, and The University of Illinois.

Specific Sources: (<sup>1</sup><http://www.dictionary.com>)<sup>2</sup>CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention / U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

(<http://www.healthfinder.gov/scripts/SearchContext.asp?topic=2878>)<sup>3</sup><http://www.uihealthcare.com/topics/digestivesystem/dige3498.html>)

(<http://www.healthfinder.gov/scripts/SearchContext.asp?topic=2878>)<sup>4</sup> [http://www.marisamontes.com/all\\_about\\_camels.htm](http://www.marisamontes.com/all_about_camels.htm))<sup>5</sup> <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/water/NU00283>)

<sup>6</sup>CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention / U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

(<http://www.healthfinder.gov/scripts/SearchContext.asp?topic=2878>)<sup>7</sup>CDC Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention / U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (<http://www.healthfinder.gov/scripts/SearchContext.asp?topic=2878>)<sup>8</sup>CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention / U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (<http://www.healthfinder.gov/scripts/SearchContext.asp?topic=2878>)<sup>9</sup><http://www.uihealthcare.com/topics/digestivesystem/dige3498.html>)<sup>10</sup><http://www.uihealthcare.com/topics/digestivesystem/dige3498.html>)