

DRINK WATER INSTEAD

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The human body contains lots of water. You can last weeks without food but only days without water. Water is found in all types of drinks and fluids, including fruit juice, soft drinks, tea, coffee, and alcohol.

However, water is the recommended fluid to satisfy thirst – and it is nature's choice. Choosing water as your preferred drink will have a positive impact on your health. The benefits of water include;

- It is sugar-free (a 600 mL bottle of soft drink can have up to 16 teaspoons of sugar)
- It is inexpensive and readily available
- Drinking enough water each day can help to keep your kidneys healthy

Plain water from the tap is your best drink. Some bottled mineral waters contain salt. This can lead to fluid retention, swelling and even increased blood pressure in some people. If you do drink bottled water, choose varieties that contain *less than 30 mg of sodium per 100 mL*.

Sugar-sweetened soft drinks and milk drinks, artificially-sweetened soft drinks, and fruit juice should be limited as they are high in sugar and add kilojoules with limited nutritional value. Also, regular consumption of sugar-sweetened soft drinks is associated with the development of diabetes, chronic kidney disease and kidney stone formation.

You can have these drinks occasionally, but they are not part of a healthy diet.

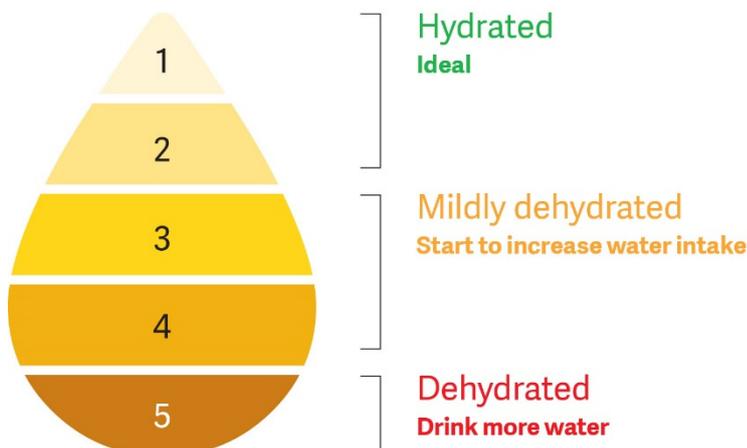
LISTEN TO YOUR THIRST

The amount of water you need to drink each day will change. It depends on your size, activity level and the weather. You will need to drink more if it is a hot day, or if you are being physically active.

One way of knowing how much to drink is to drink enough to satisfy your thirst. Your body will tell you when you are thirsty. Dehydration means your body does not have enough water and being thirsty is often a sign of already being dehydrated.

How often you go to the toilet and the colour of your urine is also a good way to tell if your body is getting enough water.

When your body has enough water, your urine will be a pale straw or lemonade colour. When you have lost more water than you have drunk, then the kidneys need to conserve water. This makes your urine much more concentrated and darker in colour. Dark yellow urine is a sure sign that you are dehydrated and that you need to drink water immediately.



You may wish to consider these tips to satisfy your thirst:

- Keep water handy at all times, whether you are at home, work, school or travelling
- Ask for a bottle of water for your table when dining out
- Drink one for one - one glass of water for one alcoholic drink (alcohol causes you to lose water)
- Add lemon, lime or orange to add zest to your water
- Try substituting a cup of coffee or tea with a glass of water
- Water down fruit juices, sports drinks and cordials
- Reduce your portion size by using smaller glasses when drinking sugary drinks

FOOD CAN ALSO SATISFY YOUR WATER NEEDS

The food that you eat also contributes to your water intake. Food provides about 20 per cent of your total water intake. The remaining 80 per cent comes from water and drinks of all kinds. Many fruits and vegetables, such as watermelon and cucumbers, are nearly 100 per cent water.

RECOGNISE DEHYDRATION

Dehydration occurs when the water content of your body is too low. It can easily be fixed by increasing your water intake.

It's important that you listen to your body's signals telling you that you are thirsty or have not had enough water to drink.

Symptoms of dehydration include:

- headaches
- fatigue
- mood changes
- slow reaction times
- dry nasal passages
- dry or cracked lips
- dark-coloured urine
- weakness
- confusion
- hallucinations

TREATMENT FOR DEHYDRATION

If you are developing early signs of dehydration, stop what you are doing and if you are outside, find some shade. Splash yourself with tepid water or apply cool, wet cloths to your face and neck and drink water slowly, small sips at a time. If your symptoms are not relieved within half an hour or so, or if you go on to develop severe symptoms such as an inability to pass urine, vomiting, weakness or cramping, consult a doctor immediately.

DEHYDRATION IN THE ELDERLY

Elderly people are often at risk of dehydration due to:

- declining kidney function
- hormonal changes
- not feeling thirsty
- medication (for example, diuretics and laxatives)
- chronic illness
- limited mobility

Keep these factors in mind if you are caring for an elderly person as they may need reminding to drink regularly.

Dehydration in the elderly may cause mental confusion, dry skin, migraines, low blood pressure, digestive complications, and persistent constipation. Severe dehydration over time could even cause organ failure.

DEHYDRATION IN CHILDREN

Children are also susceptible to dehydration, particularly if they are ill. Vomiting, fever and diarrhoea can quickly dehydrate a baby or young child. This can be a life-threatening condition. If you suspect dehydration in a child, consult a doctor immediately.

Some of the symptoms of dehydration in a child include:

- cold skin
- lethargy
- dry mouth
- depressed fontanelle on the skull
- a blue tinge to the skin as the circulation slows

SITUATIONS WHEN YOU NEED TO TAKE EXTRA NOTICE OF YOUR WATER INTAKE

- **If you have severe kidney disease:** your healthcare team will let you know if you need to limit your total fluid intake, and how much water you can drink each day.
- **Exercise:** the more you exercise, the more water you'll need to keep your body hydrated. During long sessions of intense exercise, it may be appropriate to use a sports drink that contains extra minerals and electrolytes, as they can be lost through sweat.
- **Environment:** hot or humid weather can make you sweat and therefore requires additional intake of water. Heated indoor air during winter can also cause your skin to lose moisture. Altitudes greater than 2,500 metres (8,200 feet) may trigger increased urination and more rapid breathing, which use up more of your fluid reserves. An air traveller can lose approximately 1.5 litres of water during a three-hour flight.
- **Illness or health conditions:** signs of illness such as fever, vomiting and diarrhoea cause your body to lose additional fluids. In these cases, *you should ensure that you keep your body hydrated*. Certain conditions, including bladder infections and urinary tract or kidney stones, also require increased water intake. On the other hand, conditions such as heart failure and some types of kidney, liver and adrenal diseases may require that you limit your water intake. In these cases, consult your doctor for advice.
- **Pregnancy or breast-feeding:** women who are pregnant or breast-feeding need additional water to stay hydrated.
- **You may also need more water in your diet if you:**
 - are on a high protein diet
 - are on a high fibre diet, as fluids help prevent constipation
 - have an illness that causes vomiting or diarrhoea

MORE INFORMATION

Kidney Health Australia has Position Statements on drinking water and reducing consumption of sugar-sweetened soft drinks, which are available at ww.kidney.org.au.

For more information about Kidney or Urinary health, please contact our free call Kidney Health Information Service (KHIS) on 1800 454 363. Alternatively, you may wish to email KHIS@kidney.org.au or visit our website www.kidney.org.au to access free health literature.

This is intended as a general introduction to this topic and is not meant to substitute for your doctor's or Health Professional's advice. All care is taken to ensure that the information is relevant to the reader and applicable to each state in Australia. It should be noted that Kidney Health Australia recognises that each person's experience is individual and that variations do occur in treatment and management due to personal circumstances, the health professional and the state one lives in. Should you require further information always consult your doctor or health professional.

Last reviewed November 2015