

HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M DEHYDRATED ?

Are you at risk?

Your doctor will tell you that the best way to determine if you're getting enough water every day is to listen to your body.

Activity

People who exercise strenuously need to drink more water. It's also wise to avoid exercising outdoors during the hottest period of summer days.

Weather

People living in hot, humid climates need more water than usual. Holidaymakers take note: Don't forget to factor in the weather conditions of your destination.

A person who lives in a cool or cold climate may jog three kilometres a day at home, but the same amount of exercise on the beaches of a balmy tropical island could lead to trouble.

Age

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, the body's ability to conserve water is reduced by ageing. The body excretes more water through urination and perspiration than is taken in.

Those aged 65 or older may not feel thirsty even when their bodies need water. So be sure to drink your eight glasses of water a day before you feel thirsty.

Health

Anyone who is sick with fever, diarrhoea, nausea and or vomiting, should increase their water intake.

Children and the elderly are at additional risk.

Medications

People who take diuretics (water pills) such as furosemide (Lasix) and hydrochlorothiazide (Dethiazide) must monitor themselves closely for signs of dehydration.

It is always good practice to check that any such preparations are not in conflict with medications currently being used for other medical conditions.

Signs of dehydration

Most of the time dehydration does not reach the danger level. The danger level may result in dizziness, loss of consciousness, rapid heart rate, kidney failure and finally death.

How to get more water

To prevent dehydration you need to take in plenty of fluids throughout the day, at least 8 eight-ounce/225 ml glasses of water daily even if you do not feel thirsty.

Follow these eight tips (*one for each glass you should drink*) from the American Dietetic Association to achieve the fluid intake your body needs.

1. Take a water break frequently throughout the day

2. Always take a sip when you pass a water fountain
3. Carry a bottle of water with you in your car
4. Keep a sport bottle with you at work
5. Start a meal with a cup of soup
6. Drink a beverage with each meal
7. Drink more when exercising, especially if it is hot and humid. Drink one or two glasses of water or diluted fruit juice (*one part juice to one or two parts of water*) about thirty minutes to an hour before you begin exercising. Drink another glass or more when you are finished the exercise regime.

For more intense and longer workouts increase your fluid intake to 8oz/225 ml every twenty to thirty minutes.

Skip the high calorie sports drinks unless you are working out strenuously for at least ninety minutes.

8. Consider foods as sources of water too. Lettuce, watermelon, broccoli, carrots and apples are all more than 80% water by weight.

Low-fat cottage cheese, yogurt, potatoes and canned drained tuna all contain 70% water by weight.

Do not include beverages containing caffeine (*coffee and cola*) or alcohol when tallying your daily fluid intake. These are diuretics and cause water loss.

Schedules water breaks

Experts say to drink a minimum of eight glasses of water per day. That may seem a lot of water but when you break it down throughout a typical day getting your eight-glass intake is actually fairly easy.

Try this simple schedule then make changes to it to best suit your specific daily schedule. Drink one glass of water:

1. With breakfast
2. Mid-morning
3. With lunch
4. Mid afternoon
5. Just before eating dinner
6. With dinner
7. During the evening
8. Bedtime

You can add additional glasses of water at each meal. And do not forget to 'soak up' some water before, during and after any exercise or activity you engage in.

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