

Guidelines and Goals for Staying Hydrated

How much fluid should I drink daily?

How much fluid you need depends on many factors, including your health status, how active you are, your age and where you live. Beverages are all fluids consumed by humans, including water, coffee, tea, milk, carbonated beverages, juices, beer, wine and sports drinks (i.e. Gatorade®, Powerade®)

Why is water important?

Water is crucial to your health. It makes up 60 percent of your body weight on average, and every system in your body depends on water. Every day you lose up to 1 liter or about 4 cups of water through sweating, exhaling, urinating and bowel movements. For your body to function properly, you need to replace this water by consuming beverages and foods that contain water.

What will happen if I don't drink enough water?

Lack of water can lead to dehydration, a condition that occurs when you do not have enough water in your body to carry on normal functions. Mild dehydration can decrease your energy level and make you feel tired. Dehydration can also result from long-term nausea and pain, preventing you from drinking and eating enough to get the water needed by your body. Other health conditions such as fever, vomiting and diarrhea will cause your body to lose extra fluids and can lead to dehydration as well.

What are the symptoms of dehydration?

- excessive thirst
- little or no urination
- fatigue
- muscle weakness
- headache
- dizziness
- dry mouth
- lightheadedness

Fluid Recommendations

- Fluids can include water (bottled or tap water), juice, milk, coffee, tea, Gatorade®, and soup broth.
 - Count foods such as ice cream, popsicles, flavored ices and gelatins as fluid and contribute to daily fluid needs.
 - Limit alcoholic beverages to no more than 1 serving for women, 2 servings for men/day.
 - Limit caffeinated beverages (regular coffee, tea, colas) as they act like mild diuretics and could contribute to dehydration.
 - Drink calorie-containing beverages to help give extra calories if you need to gain weight.
 - Flavored waters with vitamins and minerals added should not replace foods in the diet that are naturally rich in essential nutrients and fiber.
 - During vomiting, diarrhea, fevers or increased exercise, drink fluids that contain electrolytes such as Gatorade® to help replenish electrolytes lost in sweat, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Take a water bottle whenever leaving home. It is important to drink fluids even if you are not thirsty. Thirst is not a good signal of fluid needs.
- Try to drink most liquids between meals. Do not fill up with fluids during meals so you are too full to eat nutritious foods that provide calories and protein.
- Use medications for relief from nausea and vomiting as prescribed. They can be very helpful and may prevent dehydration.

General guidelines on estimating fluid needs

Your fluid needs are about 1 milliliter (ml) for every calorie required in your diet.

For example: If you require 2000 calories a day, then your daily fluid needs are 2000 ml a day.

2000 ml of fluid daily = 8 to 9 cups of fluid daily (each cup is 8 ounces, or 240 ml)

Consult your dietitian for your specific fluid goal.

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Reviewed By: Nutrition Education Materials Task Force

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