

THIRSTY?

Why do we need water?

Water makes up more than half of our body's weight and is absolutely necessary for life. Almost every process that happens in our bodies needs water. Every day we lose water by sweating, in our urine and by breathing. In order to stay hydrated, we have to take in as much water as we lose. Not getting enough water—being dehydrated, can make you feel tired, confused and can decrease athletic performance. Being dehydrated can also make you more likely to get heat strain, which can be very dangerous.

How much water do we need?

For many people, drinking beverages with meals and in-between when you feel thirsty is enough to stay hydrated. The total amount will be from 7 - 13 cups of fluids per day. Some people in certain situations, though, will need more water and just counting on thirst isn't enough. If it is very hot or humid—like during the summer, you will need to drink more water. If you are exercising a lot or just sweating a lot, you will also need more water. When you are sick with a fever, you will need more water, too. A simple way to be pretty sure that you are drinking enough water—look at your urine. If it is very dark in color, you probably need more water.

Can we drink too much water?

It is very difficult to drink too much water because our kidneys are very good at getting rid of extra water—this is why you spend a lot of time in the bathroom when you drink a lot of water. If you have been sweating a lot, though, you are losing more than just water. You are losing important electrolytes like sodium and potassium, too. If you only drink a lot of water to replace what you lost in your sweat, you could become dangerously low in these electrolytes. This is why sports drinks contain small amounts of electrolytes. You can also get your electrolytes by eating some food with your water.

Where do we get water?

Besides the obvious place—a refreshing glass of water to drink, we can get water from many other sources. Any beverage that we drink contains water and can contribute to the water that our bodies need each day. The problem with drinking other beverages to quench our thirst is that they tend to come with other things that we don't really need—like sugar, caffeine, and extra calories. Water, 100% fruit juice and low-fat milk are usually the healthiest drink choices. Certain foods, like fruits and vegetables also contain water.

So, this summer as the weather heats up, remember to drink plenty of water and eat plenty of good-for-you water-rich foods like fresh fruits and vegetables.



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