

Drink To Your Good Health!

Introduction

There's lots of talk about eating the right foods and taking fancy supplements, but did you realize that, next to oxygen, good old water is your most essential nutrient? In fact, water makes up about two-thirds of your body!

Your body can't operate at its best without water. It helps nearly every major function in your body, including regulation of your body temperature, circulation, and digestion. It helps protect organs and tissues, and helps cushion joints. You need to take enough fluids every day to cover what you routinely lose, and extra to cover unusual losses - you need more in hot weather, when exercising heavily and when you're sick.

Causes of Dehydration

Inadequate fluid intake leads to dehydration, which can cause problems with your body's balance of salts and electrolytes. Dehydration reduces the blood flow to the kidney, which affects the kidney's ability to produce urine. Poor hydration can also affect your mental processes, causing headaches, confusion, and disorientation.

Unfortunately, a decrease in the thirst sensation often accompanies the aging process, even though you still need as much water. Changes in the kidney may also occur as you age. Low blood pressure, congestive heart failure and blood vessel disease involving the kidney can make matters worse. Taking diuretic medications also adds to the challenge.

Dehydration Prevention

Older adults need to be especially careful to make sure they get adequate fluids. Most adults should try to drink eight 8-ounce glasses every day. Your morning coffee or tea probably has caffeine, which acts as a diuretic, as does alcohol. The healthiest

choices are plain water, seltzer water, milk, and pure fruit juice. Try adding some lemon slices to your water to give it a little twist. Lots of foods also contain water, especially fruit and vegetables (fresh, canned, frozen, cooked or raw), soup, gelatin, ice cream, sherbet, fruit juice Popsicles, yogurt, and cottage cheese.

To stay hydrated:

- Fill a bottle or pitcher with water each morning, keep it in the refrigerator, and drink from it throughout the day until you empty it.
- Take water breaks instead of coffee breaks, or choose decaf coffee or tea.
- Don't pass a water fountain without stopping for a drink.
- Carry a bottle of water when traveling.

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