

Hydration 101

Hydration for everyday health

Up to 60% of your body is water.

Water is essential for survival. It plays an important role in numerous body functions, such as temperature regulation, digestion, brain function, cell growth and survival, waste removal, joint and membrane lubrication, shock absorption, and oxygen transport.

Everyone needs different amounts of water depending on individual characteristics. We take in water through fluid and food and lose water through breathing, sweat, and excrement. Hydration is important for **everyone**, not just those who exercise. It is important to stay hydrated to ensure that body systems function properly and tissues are kept healthy.

Dehydration danger.

Dehydration occurs when the body doesn't have enough water. It can lead to decreased physical and mental performance and, depending on severity, can manifest itself with a variety of symptoms. As dehydration progresses, symptoms become more severe:

- Thirst
- Dry skin
- Sleepiness
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Constipation



- Irritability
- Confusion
- Low blood pressure
- Increased heart rate
- Rapid breathing rate
- Fever



Unconsciousness



How much water is enough?

- Urine color is a good indicator of hydration status. Urine should be a light straw or pale yellow color.
- Those who exercise or work in hot environments will lose more fluid through sweat and need to consume more fluid.
- The Institute of Medicine has established an adequate intake level for water: 2.2 liters per day for women and 3 liters per day for men.
- If you exercise frequently and want a more accurate idea of how much fluid you are losing in sweat, compare your weight before and after exercise.



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Fluid needs and exercise.

It is important to stay hydrated all the time, not just immediately prior to exercise. Fluid needs vary based on a variety of factors, such as the environment, individual sweat rate, body size, and the type of clothing worn.

For exercise that is intense, longer than one hour, or takes place in a hot environment, or for individuals who sweat heavily, a beverage that contains carbohydrates and electrolytes may be even more beneficial. The chart below gives a general guideline for fluid needs before, during, and after exercise. These suggestions may be too much for some and not enough for others - know your body and adjust as needed.



Tips for staying hydrated.

It can be difficult to make proper hydration a habit. Use the tips below to make adequate water consumption part of your daily routine.



Start your day with a glass of water and carry a water bottle throughout the day.



Avoid sweetened beverages, such as soda, sweet tea, and coffee drinks.



Flavor water with fruit, mint leaves, herbal tea, cucumbers, or a splash of 100 percent juice.



Replenish electrolytes during and after prolonged, intense physical activity.



Know your body: pay attention to sweat volume, sweat saltiness, urine color, and symptoms.

Information adapted from: U.S. Geological Survey; Mayo Clinic; Sports, Cardiovascular and Wellness Nutrition, a Dietetic Practice Group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

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