

Don't Forget to HYDRATE!



Why is it important to be hydrated?

Water is the most important nutrient for your body. It makes up about 60% of your body. Proper water levels are needed in your body for transporting nutrients, regulating our body temperature, maintaining your blood pressure, expelling toxins and for lubricating your joints, and so much more. Therefore, being hydrated is extremely important for your health, exercise performance and recovery.

Hydration is particularly essential both during and after exercising. Water gets lost through perspiration and needs to get replenished back in our bodies. The higher your workout intensity, the greater your risk is for dehydration. Dehydration can be prevented if you are able to obtain enough fluids throughout the day by drinking water and by eating foods with high water content.

The role of electrolytes on hydration

A balance of water and electrolytes is needed in order for your body systems to function normally. Electrolytes are essential minerals that help you maintain your water balance by directing water and nutrients to areas where they are most needed in your body. Common electrolytes include calcium, sodium, potassium, phosphorus, chloride and magnesium. When you exercise, sweating causes you to lose electrolytes, primarily sodium and potassium. Electrolytes are also needed to help your muscles contract normally and helps prevents cramping. Electrolyte imbalances and dehydration can lead to muscle weakness, fatigue, muscle spasms, and in severe cases cardiac and neurological issues.

How much water should you drink a day?

How much water you need to drink a day varies from person to person. Various factors such as your exercise activity, the climate you live in, gender and your weight influence how much water your body needs each day.

Depending on where you live, water intake can vary from roughly eight, 8-oz. cups per day to as many as 15 cups. Water intakes below or above these amounts may not create any health risk or performance consequences because of the high variability due to various factors. It is important to find the amount in this range that works for you, taking into account your sweat and activity levels, among other factors.

Make sure to spread out your water intake throughout the day. You don't want to drink your recommended water intake all in the morning to get it out of the way or all at night if you forgot during the day. One trick to knowing if you are hydrating enough is looking at the color of your urine. Pale, clear urine means you are well-hydrated and dark urine means you are severely dehydrated.

Importance of hydration in the recovery process

Hydrating appropriately after exercising is vital to the recovery of your body. Since exercise causes tears in your muscle tissues, proper recovery and hydration is needed to build the muscle tissue to keep it healthy and make it stronger. Having enough water in your body allows the needed nutrients and electrolytes to get transported to your muscles, and allows for the removal of waste. Water also aids in protein synthesis which is required for muscle repair and muscle growth. When you do not hydrate enough, the transport of nutrients to your muscles gets slowed down and disrupts the repair and growth processes. This can further lead to pain and injuries.

Tips to increase water intake:

- Avoid diuretics/have diuretics in moderation. Common diuretics include coffee, caffeinated tea and alcohol. Diuretics can dehydrate you because they cause you to urinate more, which expels water from your body.
- Eat fruits and vegetables with high water content. Foods with high water content include watermelon, celery, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, strawberries, spinach, grapes and baby carrots. Note: cooked vegetables lose a lot of their water content, so it is better to eat them raw if hydration is a concern.
- Invest in a water bottle that you love! This way you will want to carry the water bottle around with you everywhere you go.
- Keep a glass of water next to your bed so you can drink it before you go to bed and when you wake up.
- Water down sports drinks (Gatorade/Powerade). Sports drinks are loaded with sugar so it is best to create a diluted version of the sports drink. This way you are able to get the necessary electrolytes you need after a workout but without adding the extra sugar.
- Use an app to track/remind you to drink water. One fun, free water reminder app is called Plant Nanny. You get to choose a plant and have to keep the plant alive by tracking your

water consumption. Every time you drink a cup of water your plant will also absorb the water and grow!

- Eat spicy food. This will help you crave water while you are eating.
- Add fruits and herbs to your water to add flavor and diversify you drinking options.



Reference:

<http://www.acsm.org/docs/brochures/selecting-and-effectively-using-hydration-for-fitness.pdf>

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/153188.php>

<http://0-search.proquest.com.shulsso.sacredheart.edu/docview/212334059?pq-origsite=360link>