

Drink More Water

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Every system of your body needs water—in fact, most of your body is water. Your lean muscle, blood and brain are each more than 70 percent water. This vital fluid is one of the most important ingredients your body needs everyday. And yet, most people do not consume enough water. Here are ten tips to put the power of H₂O on your side.

1 Never Underestimate the Value of Water. Water regulates body temperature, transports nutrients and oxygen, carries away waste, helps detoxify the kidneys and liver, dissolves vitamins and minerals and cushions the body from injury. Every day you lose on average 10 to 12 cups of water that needs replaced to maintain your body's important fluid balance.

2 Watch for Dehydration. According to the Mayo Clinic and other leading health care organizations, even mild dehydration can lead to health problems such as lethargy and constipation. Dehydration symptoms can include loss of appetite, minor headaches, dizziness and general lack of mental clarity. There is also evidence that drinking adequate water may help prevent some diseases, such as kidney stones, and may be associated with a lower incidence of colon cancer.

3 8 Is Not Always the Magic Number. Eight 8-ounce glasses of water daily is the standard rule of thumb, but you may need even more, especially if you exercise. One way to calculate your fluid needs is to divide your weight in half. This number in ounces is your recommended daily water intake.

4 When In Doubt, Fill Your Glass Again. You will need to drink extra amounts of water in dehydrating conditions such as hot, humid or cold weather or high altitudes. You should drink more if you have a cold or the flu; even more if you have a fever. Additionally, some weight management experts believe that drinking a glass of water before meals can help reduce food intake and aid digestion.

5 Watch for Fluids That Do Not Count! Water is best, but milk, juices and other beverages are

about 90 percent water, so they also can help meet your hydration needs. Caffeinated beverages and alcohol act as diuretics and increase fluid loss, so they don't count. In fact, have an extra glass of water for each cup of these liquids you drink.

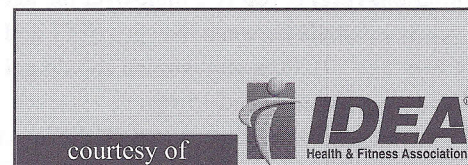
6 Drink Before You Get the Signal. Many experts believe that if you wait until you're thirsty, you already are slightly dehydrated. Drink a glass of water when you wake up in the morning and another glass before you go to sleep.

7 Do Not Leave Your Water Intake to Chance. Develop a consistent water plan with consumption evenly paced throughout the day. Keep water bottles and pitchers near you as a reminder, or schedule water breaks into your day planner.

8 Drink Often While Exercising. To prevent dehydration while exercising and perspiring, you must replace water at a faster rate. The American Dietetic Association (ADA) recommends at least two cups of fluids two hours before exertion, followed by another two cups of water approximately 15 to 20 minutes before endurance exercises. During exercise replenish fluids every 15 to 20 minutes.

9 Long Exercise Session? Go for Sports Drinks. According to the ADA, the typical North American diet provides ample sodium, potassium, chloride and magnesium to replace sweat losses. However, exercise sessions longer than one hour and/or exercising in extreme environmental conditions may warrant drinking a sports beverage containing electrolytes to enhance fluid absorption and carbohydrates to supply energy.

10 When Too Much Is Too Much. If you notice unexplained increases in thirst and urination, consult your physician to determine the cause. Increased thirst and increased urination (both in volume and frequency) can be symptoms of disease, including various forms of diabetes.



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