

Staying Hydrated

Regular physical activity and healthy diets are important for healthy aging. However, the body's basic need for water is often overlooked, resulting in dehydration. Hydration is the replacement of body fluids lost through sweating, exhaling, and eliminating waste. On average, the body loses and needs to replace about 2-3 quarts of water daily.

Many foods we eat are composed mostly of water. Foods with high water content include greens and most fruits and vegetables. Caffeinated beverages such as soft drinks, tea and coffee count, in part, toward our daily fluid intake. Though they do not dehydrate you, they can promote increased urination and should not be the primary nonfood source of liquids during your day. The best sources of hydration are water and drinks that are primarily water including: sport replacement drinks, herbal teas, lemon water and broth.

Here are tips to increase water intake.

- Drink a glass of water or juice first thing in the morning.
- To meet your body's needs, and prevent frequent urination problems, drink regularly throughout the day, rather than several big gulps at once.
- Constipation problems may be due to not drinking enough water – our bodies need water to balance fiber intake.
- Fluids are more easily absorbed when they are cooler, about 40-60 degrees. Keep a 1-2-quart bottle of water in your refrigerator and make sure you drink and refill it daily.
- When you pass a drinking fountain, stop for a refreshing drink.
- Use the color of your urine as a guide for how well you are hydrated. If you urinate regularly and your urine is light yellow, you are drinking enough. If it is dark yellow, increase your fluid intake.
- Carry a water bottle with you and drink regularly between meals.
- Allergy sufferers and people taking medications should try to meet the fluid goals outlined above. Our kidneys and liver need extra water to process medicines.
- Drink 1-2 cups of fluid 30 minutes before exercising and ½ cup-1 cup fluid every 25 minutes while you exercise. Within two hours after exercising, drink enough water to replace fluid lost during workout (for example, 2 cups for each pound lost).
- Drink before you get thirsty. Thirst is a sign that your body is already dehydrated. Keep drinking regularly throughout the day even after your thirst is quenched.

Source: Texas Department of Health, CDC.