

## Hydration For Health

It's essential to stay hydrated as temperatures climb. Drinking enough fluids is one of the most important things people can do to prevent heat-related illness. As a person loses fluids, dehydration occurs. Heat stroke and heat exhaustion are serious health conditions that can be avoided.

About two-thirds of your body weight is water. Your body, including your heart, kidneys, and blood, needs daily water to function. According to the National Institutes of Health, even when you're inactive, your body loses more than a quart of water daily through urine, perspiration, sweat, and breath.

Though we've all heard the eight-glasses-a-day (64-ounces) recommendation, hydration needs vary from person to person. It depends on age and health and changes in heat, humidity, and activity levels. As a general guideline, another recommendation for how much fluid you need is to divide your body weight by 2; the answer is how many ounces you need to drink daily.

How do you know if you're drinking enough? Signs of dehydration include thirst, dry lips, dry mouth, or flushed skin. Thirst cues also can diminish with age. You may experience a headache, dizziness, low blood pressure, and high heart rate. Your urine may be dark yellow if your body is trying to conserve water. To relieve mild dehydration, drink fluids.

Consider these tips to stay hydrated.

1. **Drink Regularly** – Drink before you're thirsty. Your best defense against dehydration is drinking water consistently so you never reach the point of thirst. Drink 8 cups of fluid each day. This includes water, milk, plain coffee or tea, juice, low/no-calorie beverages, and low-sodium broth.
2. **Choose Water** – Choose water over other beverages when you are thirsty. Drink water when you wake up, between meals, and during meals and snacks. Add a hint of flavor to water with fresh fruits, vegetables, or herbs.
3. **Schedule Water Breaks** – Take frequent water breaks. Schedule times to drink water throughout the day. Set alarms or notifications on smart devices as reminders throughout the day. Set a goal for yourself, and keep track of your intake.
4. **Body Signals** – Be mindful of whether your body is hungry or thirsty. You can overeat because you mistake thirst for hunger.

5. Eat High Water Content Foods – Munch on water-rich produce. Watermelon, cantaloupe, and strawberries are among the fruits with the highest water content. Cucumbers and iceberg lettuce are the highest among vegetables with high water content, followed by celery, tomatoes, and zucchini.
6. Activity – Drink more water in hot weather and when you are active. Keep a bottle or glass of water with you during the day and regularly refill it.

Staying hydrated during the warm summer months is an important part of enjoying the season. By consuming enough water and hydrating foods, you can meet your body's hydration needs and stay healthy and active all summer long. If you or someone you're with is experiencing signs of dehydration, the first thing to reach for is — you guessed it — a glass (or two) of water. Keep in mind that heat exhaustion happens quickly, especially during summer activities. If you feel dehydrated, dizzy, or overheated, get out of the sun, sip some water (slowly), and apply cooling compresses to your head, neck, and chest. If your symptoms don't improve quickly, get to a doctor or call 9-1-1.

(Sources: [www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com); [www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org); [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov); [www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov))