

## Winter Hydration

Did you know a person's thirst response diminishes by up to 40% in cold weather? Blood is prevented from flowing freely to extremities when blood vessels constrict. Directing that blood flow to the body's core to protect vital organs tricks the body into thinking it's properly hydrated. Therefore, people often drink less water, thus increasing the risk of dehydration.

Staying adequately hydrated is important during the winter. As the temperatures begin to drop, we may not feel like we need the same amount of fluids as in warmer weather. However, humans constantly lose fluids through respiration, sweat, and urination, even in cold weather. Learn more about winter dehydration, including the signs and some tips for countering it.

When the body loses more water than it takes in, dehydration sets in. Causes of winter dehydration include warmer indoor temperatures, cold air, too many layers of clothing, and less water consumption. Sweating is often less obvious during cold weather because sweat evaporates more rapidly. Some older adults are susceptible to dehydration because they may limit fluid intake due to concerns about incontinence. Also, the thirst mechanism isn't as effective as the body ages.

How much water should you drink? The recommended amount of water depends on factors such as gender, age, activity level, altitude, weather, and overall health; this can vary from person to person.

Regarding how much water to drink daily, most people recite the 8 x 8 rule – drink eight 8-ounce glasses, or 64 ounces, of water daily. Another method to determine the minimum ounces of fluid you may need each day is to take your weight in pounds and divide it in half. For example, if you weigh 160 lbs., you will require at least 80 fluid ounces daily.

Signs of dehydration are numerous, but some more common ones include headaches, dizziness, dry skin, and dry mouth.

Also, monitor your urine. If you are adequately hydrated, you should urinate about once every two to four hours, and your urine should be colorless or a very pale yellow. If it is darker than that, you haven't had enough fluid.

Here are some useful tips for staying on top of your winter hydration.

### **1. Use a Water Bottle**

Take your water bottle everywhere you go, and if you're at home or working in the office, fill up a pitcher of water and keep it on your desk. Make hydration a routine with the goal of drinking a certain amount of water each day.

### **2. Drink Tea or Hot Water**

Studies show that drinking hot beverages can be just as effective in hydration as cold water. Healthy choices include a glass of warm apple cider, warm low-fat or fat-free milk, or a mug of unsweetened hot herbal tea.

### **3. Infuse Your Water**

Add flavor, such as a wedge of lemon, lime, or other pieces of fruit, to plain water. You can also utilize unsweetened water enhancers to add an infusion of flavor.

### **4. Eat Water-Rich Foods**

Fruit and vegetables such as berries, citrus fruit, celery, cucumbers, melons, and tomatoes supply water. Still, other foods like hot soups will help your body meet its needs.

### **5. Practice the 1:1 Rule**

For every non-water drink, pair it with a glass of water. If you can't give up coffee, pop, or juice completely, try alternating it with water.

It's common to feel less thirsty in cold weather, and many people are unaware that cold-weather dehydration exists. Regardless of the temps outside, staying hydrated is important all year round.