

How Much Water (Fluids) Should You Drink Every Day?

Water makes up about 60% of your body weight. Every system in the body relies on water for either flushing out toxins from organs, carrying nutrients to cells, or providing moisture to ear, nose and throat tissues. Every day you lose water through breathing, perspiration, urine and bowel movements. You must replenish your body's water supply on a daily basis by consuming foods and beverages that contain water. If you don't consume enough fluids to meet your daily requirements, mild dehydration can occur which can make you feel tired and drain your energy.



Doctors usually recommend most healthy adults consume 8 (8 ounce) cups of water to meet their daily needs. The average adult loses about 6 cups of fluid per day from urine output and another 4 cups a day from breathing, sweating and bowel movements. The Institute of Medicine recommends men consume about 13 cups of fluids per day and women consume about 9 cups of total fluids. Solid foods add another 20% to the body's fluid intake.

You may need to adjust your total fluid intake depending on your activity level, the environment you live in, your health status, and if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

- **Exercise** – If you exercise or participate in any activity that makes you sweat, you need to drink extra water to make up for your fluid loss. An extra 1.5 to 2 cups of water should meet your needs for short bouts of exercise. Intense exercise lasting over an hour will require more fluid replacement, preferably using a sports drink containing sodium to prevent low sodium levels in your blood due to drinking too much water.
- **Climate** – Hot temperatures or humid weather can make you sweat more and require more fluid intake. High altitudes greater than 8,200 feet can cause more urination and rapid breathing, which may also increase your fluid needs.
- **Illnesses or health conditions** – Having a fever, vomiting or diarrhea causes your body to lose more fluids. In addition to drinking more fluids, you may also need to replace mineral losses with Gatorade or Powerade drinks. Bladder or urinary tract infections also require increased fluid intakes. On the other hand, congestive heart failure, kidney or liver diseases are conditions that may decrease urination and require a limited fluid intake.
- **Pregnancy or breastfeeding** -- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding need more fluids to stay hydrated. The Institute of Medicine recommends pregnant women drink about 10 cups of fluids daily and breastfeeding women should drink about 13 cups of fluids per day to meet their hydration needs.

Beverages such as milk and juice consist mainly of water and can count toward your daily fluid needs. Beer, wine and caffeinated beverages like coffee, tea and soda, can also contribute to your total fluid intake, however, they should not be a major part of it as they provide empty calories and may dehydrate you. Remember, even solid foods, especially fruits and vegetables, contain a lot of water and can add 1 to 2 cups of fluid to your recommended daily fluid needs.

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