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Water

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Water

Did you know that more than half of your body weight is water?

Our bodies cannot make enough water to survive. In fact, human beings can only live three to four days without water. Adults usually need to drink at least six to eight cups of water or fluid each day. The amount needed depends upon

- Body size
- Level of physical activity
- Age
- Health
- Climate

The human body needs water for many important reasons.

- Blood is 83 percent water. Blood is needed for all body functions.
- Water helps break down certain foods and moves them through the digestive tract.
- Water helps joints move smoothly.
- Water is in the fluid between internal organs. It helps protect them and cuts down on friction between them.
- The brain, eyes and spinal cord need water for protection.
- Water washes waste products out in the urine and through the skin.

- Water helps body temperature to change more slowly. Perspiration helps to cool the body when it is too hot.
- Water helps build hormones and enzymes that regulate the body.

What are the best ways to get water?

Over half of the water you need comes from liquids you drink. These liquids are good sources of water.

- Water
- Fruit juices (100 percent)
- Milk
- Decaffeinated beverages

Liquids containing caffeine or alcohol can cause fluid loss. These drinks are often sources of caffeine.

- Coffee
- Tea
- Soft Drinks

Over a third of the water you need comes from food you eat. Fruits and vegetables are good sources of water. Meat, fish and chicken provide some water. Most grain products offer very little water, but prepared pasta and rice may be up to 1/3 water. Fats, such as butter or margarine, contain the least amount of water.

Dehydration

Loss of water can cause health problems such as dehydration, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Dehydration can happen when water in your body is not replaced. Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Dry lips and mouth
- A small amount of saliva
- A small amount of urine
- Dark yellow urine

The following are warning signs that need medical attention right away:

- Rapid, strong pulse
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- High fever
- Weakness

Thirst is a sign of dehydration. Don't wait until you are thirsty to take a drink. Drink water throughout the day and with meals. Drink more water if you are:

- Pregnant
- Breast feeding
- Working in hot weather
- Participating in physical activity

If you are going to be playing or working outdoors in the heat, be sure to:

- Drink two to three glasses of water one to two hours before going outside.
- Take water breaks every 15 minutes.
- Continue to drink after the activity.
- Plan to be most active during the cooler parts of the day.
- Remind children and older adults to drink water throughout the day.

Tips about Drinking Water

- Tap water is often fortified with fluoride. Fluoride is a mineral that helps protect teeth and bones. Bottled water is seldom fortified with fluoride.
- It is hard to clean and dry a plastic water bottle container in which water was sold. It is safer to buy, wash and reuse plastic water bottle containers that are dishwasher safe.
- Place a pitcher of water in the refrigerator during hot weather. This way your family has cold water ready to drink.

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