

Wonderful Water



& Why You Need It

Water is a wonderful thing. Whether it's a hot day, you just completed an intense workout, or just rolled out of bed – drinking water when you need it most provides a great feeling of instant gratification. More importantly, water is critical to our bodies, impacting our health at the most basic cellular level. The connection between water and good health has been studied for decades and there are countless nonprofit organizations dedicated to preserving the health of water, one of our planet's most vital natural resources.

While we all know water is important, most of us don't really think about why it's important or what we'd do without it. You've probably heard the average person can go up to two weeks without food, but did you know we can't survive much more than five days without water? Science has also proven that getting enough water can reduce the incidence of disease and prevent the loss of brain function.

Thirsty yet? Let's explore the wonder of water together – including how it impacts our bodies, how to know if you're getting enough, and tips and tricks for staying hydrated in any situation.

The Many Functions of Water

Water is about much more than preventing thirst. Of the most importance, water earns its keep in our body by carrying

oxygen and important nutrients to our cells. This is critical to helping nearly every major system in our body function properly. From there, the list of tasks water does for our bodies just keeps going. Here are a few functions of water and why our bodies need it so badly.

What Does Water Do?

- Carries oxygen and nutrients to cells
- Regulates body temperature
- Dissolves nutrients and minerals needed for optimal health
- Protects organs and tissues
- Lubricates joints
- Supports kidneys and liver by flushing out waste



Water & Your Health

Water has also been proven to support good health and help prevent a number of physical problems. Here are a few benefits associated with drinking enough water each and every day.

- **Enhances Physical Performance** – Hydration improves your physical performance by helping to maintain your body temperature and providing the much-needed energy to get you through a workout or strenuous activity. Being dehydrated can lead to fatigue which can make your workouts feel harder than on a day when you're well-hydrated.
- **Supports Brain Function** – Did you know that water can help improve cognitive

performance, reaction times, and mood? A study published in *Frontiers in Human Neurosciences* journal looked at the effects of water on participants asked to perform a number of mental tests. Those who drank water just before the tests had a 14% improvement in reaction time when compared to those who didn't. The study also evaluated mood and revealed those who were more dehydrated felt more tense, confused, and sad.

- **Helps Avoid Headaches** – While not all headaches are caused by dehydration, it's definitely a common trigger. Several studies published in the *Headache* medical journal indicate that dehydration can cause a certain type of headache that aches with movement. In surveys, these respondents' symptoms improved after drinking water.
- **Supports Weight Loss** – Water not only makes you

feel full, it can boost your metabolism – both of which can help if you're trying to lose weight. If you're hungry, drink a tall glass of water and wait for 30 minutes before snacking. Multiple studies have demonstrated water's ability to significantly improve metabolism shortly after drinking it. If you're feeling sluggish, water is a great way to get things moving.

- **Prevents Diabetes** – A study published in 2011 in *Diabetes Care* (a publication of the American Diabetes Association) indicated that drinking water can help prevent the development of high blood sugar, otherwise known as hyperglycemia. The study, which included more than 3,500 men, further confirms the importance of drinking enough water every day.
- **Keeps Things Regular** – Drinking enough water is critical to good digestion and can help prevent constipation. For those

struggling with regularity, a doctor's first piece of advice is often to increase water intake. That's because water helps food work its way through your digestive tract and also keeps your intestines smooth, making stool easier to pass.

climates, are breastfeeding or pregnant, or have experienced the unpleasantness associated with the stomach flu (vomiting and/or diarrhea) are more likely to become dehydrated. But it's important for everyone to keep an eye out for these early signs.

- **You fail the “skin pinch test.”** Your skin can help you measure how well-hydrated you are in numerous ways. The first is to check the skin's “turgor” or elasticity. Pinch the skin on the top of your hand up and see what happens. If the skin quickly drops back to being flat, you're hydrated. If it stays pinched like a tent for a few seconds, that's a sign of dehydration. Other skin symptoms include dry, cool, cracked skin; flushed appearance; and lack of sweat.
- **You can't remember your last trip to the bathroom.** If you are well-hydrated, you may go to the bathroom up to 10 times per day (or more if you're also drinking caffeinated

Are You Well-Hydrated?

Since even mild dehydration has been linked to health problems – including fatigue, mood swings, and even reduced brain function – it's important to pay attention to your body and learn to recognize the signs of dehydration. Also, consider your risk for dehydration. Those who are very active, live in warmer

How to Know If You're Dehydrated – Early Signs

- **You're thirsty.** While this seems obvious, experts say you shouldn't really allow yourself to get to the point of thirst. If you're getting the water you need throughout the day, you won't even feel the twinge of thirst (which is a sign that your body is already deficient).

How Much Do We Need?

Research and opinions vary greatly on this, but at Beyond Diet we recommend drinking half your weight in ounces each day. Here's a rough outline of what that looks like.

Weight	Ounces Needed Per Day	How Many Cups?
150 pounds	75 ounces	Approximately (9) 8-ounce cups or (5) 16-ounce bottles
200 pounds	100 ounces	Approximately (13) 8-ounce cups or (6) 16-ounce bottles
250 pounds	125 ounces	Approximately (16) 8-ounce cups or (8) 16-ounce bottles
300 pounds	150 ounces	Approximately (19) 8-ounce cups or (9) 16-ounce bottles

Increase your intake by 8 ounces for each caffeinated beverage you drink, and on days when you work out, be sure to drink at least an extra 8 ounces of water.

drinks). If you can't quite remember the last time you went, it's time to take a drink!

- **Your heartbeat feels faster than normal.** If your heart is beating quickly when you're resting, you may be dehydrated. This is due to the imbalance of electrolytes caused by dehydration, which can cause changes in the electrical impulses in your heart.
- **It feels like there's a hammer pounding your head.** Headaches are often caused by dehydration, so if your head is throbbing, drink 8-12 ounces of water before reaching for the pain reliever.
- **Your muscles are cramping.** Muscle cramps are often linked to dehydration, and many athletes struggle with this during the summer months. Scientists aren't exactly sure why, but there are multiple theories. Some think it's because water keeps your cells hydrated and helps muscles contract and relax. Others believe it's because your nerves are more sensitive when they don't get enough fluid.
- **Your urine is dark or golden yellow.** The color of your urine is one of the easiest ways to tell if you're lacking hydration. Ideally, you should be seeing very light yellow to clear urine when you go. As the color gets darker or more golden, that's a sign of increasing levels of dehydration. The lighter the color, the better off you are.



Tips & Tricks for Getting Enough

Maybe you have a hard time remembering to drink your water, or maybe you just don't really care for plain water. Either way, here are some tips and tricks to keep you on track with getting your recommended daily amount of H₂O.

- **Find a favorite cup.** Whether it's a temperature-controlled Tervis or Yeti, or a cup featuring your alma mater, favorite sports team, or character – finding a cup you love can help you enjoy drinking water. Consider whether you prefer a straw, lid, or handle (or all three!) and make sure you find the cup that checks all your boxes. Regardless of your preference, make sure you keep it handy and buy a back-up in case you misplace it.
- **Set a timer or use an app.** With mobile phones, we all have timers at our fingertips. Set a timer to remind you to drink your water... and you can even log water intake on your iPhone, Apple Watch, or apps such as MyFitnessPal.
- **Take it with you.** Pack a cup or small thermos of ice water when you leave in the morning and refill it throughout the day. Also, it's a good idea to keep a gallon of water in the trunk of your car. This is great for traveling, after a workout, or any time you are stuck in the car and need a drink of water.
- **Sleep and wake with water.** Just before bed, down a last-minute cup of water to help

you stay hydrated while you sleep. Similarly, it's a great idea to drink a full cup of water as soon as you wake to kickstart your day.

- **Make it interesting.** If you don't love plain water or you get tired of it, add some pizzazz. Add fresh fruit, cucumbers, herbs, or a splash of juice. You can also enjoy a flavored seltzer water occasionally to add some interest.
- **Food as a source.** You can get water from the foods you eat, too. If you struggle with getting enough water from drinking, foods that are high in water content include watermelon (duh!), strawberries, cantaloupe, cucumbers, celery, and spinach.

Now that you know all the wonders of water, it's time to take a few moments to hydrate. Your body and mind will thank you!

Sources

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