

Staying hydrated is essential for overall health and wellness, as water plays a crucial role in various bodily processes:

- **Maintains body temperature:** Water helps regulate your body temperature through sweating and respiration.
- **Lubricates and cushions joints:** It keeps your joints flexible and reduces the risk of injury.
- **Protects sensitive tissues:** Essential for keeping tissues like your eyes, nose, and mouth moist.
- **Aids digestion:** Helps prevent constipation and aids in the breakdown of food.
- **Removes waste:** Necessary for kidney function and removing waste through urine.
- **Supports cardiovascular health:** Maintains blood volume and allows efficient circulation.

Harms of dehydration

- **Headaches and dizziness:** Lack of water can cause headaches and dizziness due to reduced blood volume and flow to the brain.
- **Fatigue:** Dehydration can lead to fatigue as your body has to work harder to perform basic functions.
- **Constipation:** Without enough water, your digestive system can't function properly.
- **Poor skin health:** Dehydration can cause your skin to become dry and prone to wrinkles.
- **Impaired cognitive function:** Can affect concentration, alertness, and short-term memory.
- **Heat injury:** In severe cases, dehydration can lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- **Kidney stones:** Insufficient water can lead to kidney stones and urinary tract infections.

Calculating your fluid needs

Many factors impact how much water you need, including your age, sex, activity level, and overall health. Individuals with certain health conditions or at different stages of life may have different fluid needs. The following strategies for estimating fluid needs are general guidance, so make sure to work with your Nourish dietitian to establish optimal hydration goals for you.

Color check

A simple method to determine if you are adequately hydrated is to observe the color of your urine. If you are drinking enough water, your urine will be a pale yellow. If it appears dark yellow or amber, you likely need to increase your water intake.

Simple estimation equation

1 mL/kcal of intake = mL fluid required daily



What counts towards hydration

- **Water:** The best and most direct source.
- **Other beverages:** Such as milk, juice, and herbal teas.
- **Fruits and vegetables:** Many fruits and veggies have high water content, like watermelon, cucumbers, and oranges.
- **Soups and broths:** These can contribute significantly to your fluid intake.

The best source of hydration is water, which provides the essential fluids the body needs. Other beverages, but it's important to be mindful of those that are high in added sugars, caffeine, or alcohol.

Electrolyte beverages or supplements may support hydration in specific scenarios. For example, very active individuals, during instances of significant fluid loss (such as increased sweating in hot climates), or illness (e.g. fluid loss from vomiting and diarrhea).

Does caffeine affect hydration?

Caffeine, found in some beverages like coffee and tea, has very mild diuretic properties, which means it can increase urine production and potentially lead to increased fluid loss. However, the diuretic effect of caffeine is relatively mild, especially for regular caffeine consumers, and it doesn't typically lead to significant dehydration. In moderate amounts, caffeinated beverages like coffee and tea can still contribute to your daily fluid intake. The key is to maintain a balanced intake of fluids throughout the day, including both caffeinated and non-caffeinated beverages, to ensure proper hydration.

Tips on increasing hydration

- **Carry a water bottle:** Always have a reusable water bottle with you.
- **Set reminders:** Use an app or alarm to remind you to drink water throughout the day.
- **Eat hydrating foods:** Incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet. On average, about 20-30% of a person's total water intake comes from food, while the remaining 70-80% comes from beverages.
- **Flavor your water:** Add a slice of lemon, lime, or cucumber for a refreshing twist. Sparkling water can also be a great option to increase hydration.
- **Drink a glass before each meal:** Helps to ensure you are drinking water regularly.
- **Track your intake:** Keep a log of how much water you drink to stay accountable.
- **Listen to your body:** Pay attention to your body's signals, such as fatigue, dry mouth, or dark urine, which can indicate dehydration.
- **Freeze some freezer-safe water bottles:** Take one with you for ice-cold water all day long.

Sources

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