

Health benefits of drinking water

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Dehydration: symptoms and effects

Thirst serves as an alarm, alerting people that their bodies need water. But thirst is reactive rather than pro-active; generally by the time people become aware of thirst, the body is moving towards mild dehydration.

Mild dehydration can have both mental and physical effects. It can cause fatigue and headaches and adversely affect regulation of body temperature. A drop in water level as small as 2 percent in body weight can significantly reduce physical endurance and adversely affect sport skills performance. It can also be shown to impair mental functions such as alertness, concentration, visual tracking and short-term memory.

If water loss reaches 6-8 percent of body weight, the consequences can be more serious, including heat stroke and damage to vital organs. Water is the main component of all the vital organs (brain, heart, lungs, kidneys etc) so it is important to drink water to provide your body with what it needs to function properly. Water is the source of life, and if water in-take is insufficient or we lose more body water than usual we can quickly get dehydrated to a point that can be life threatening. Therefore it is essential to drink water regularly throughout the day.

Exercise

When practising a physical activity, in order to maintain your physical performance, in particular endurance and dexterity, you must ensure your body is properly hydrated, by remembering to drink water before, during and after exercise. Jogging for one hour makes you lose between 0.5 and 1L of water, so it takes more than just one glass to rehydrate!

Illness and Injury

Certain illnesses can also increase the need for water, when vomiting and/or diarrhea it increases water losses in the body. Likewise major injuries can result in dehydration through loss of blood or from wound secretions.

Dieting

When you diet it results in the increased production of bodily waste, to help with it's elimination it is very important to drink at least 1.5 litres of water a day. This amount should be adapted depending on physical activity and the climate.

Drinking water is a healthy diet option - that's why so many active, healthy people enjoy the natural refreshment of our products, and why it is consistently drunk during exercise to re-hydrate the body.

Weather and Climate

Hot weather increases the need for water intake. As part of the thermo regulation, water evaporation from the skin is used to cool the body. However hot, cold, dry climates also contribute to water loss and require regular hydration. In closed, climate-controlled environments, such as airplanes and other transportation means, it is important to drink water regularly because of very dry air from air conditioning.

Pregnancy and Lactation

Pregnant women have greater need for water for two main reasons: they have increased blood volume and they need to amniotic fluid in which the fetus swims. Laction requires increased fluid intake for the production of breast milk.

How much water does the body need?

Men and Women

Because men have a higher percentage of water in their bodies than women (65% vs 60%), and because their bodies tend to be larger, they need to ingest more water than women. Healthy well hydrated adult men and women consume on average 3 and 2.2 litres of water per day respectively.

The Young

Infants and young children need to ingest more water than adults proportionately. That is because their bodies contain a higher percentage of water and their surface-to-volume ratio is larger than in adults, so more water is lost through the skin (perspiration and sweating). In addition, young children and infants have difficulty communicating their sensation of thirst and immature kidneys in infants excrete more diluted urine. An 8 year old boy need 1.2 litres of water per day on average.

The Elderly

Older people have proportionately less water in their bodies than others. However, the elderly need to monitor water intake carefully to prevent dehydration because ageing diminishes the sensation of thirst. This can create health problems beyond dehydration. Staying well hydrated is important for everyone, especially the elderly, they need to drink small quantities of water regularly throughout the day.

If you would like find out more about the health benefits of drinking water please visit Water UK's website at: www.water.org.uk/home/water