



Hydration Basics

Water is the most important nutrient in the body. It makes up 70% of muscle and 75% of the brain. Water has several important functions in the body. It creates the water-based environment needed for the chemical actions that sustain life, regulates body temperature, eliminates waste and toxins from the body, and helps maintain proper muscle tone. In addition to drinking water, people hydrate their bodies with juice, milk, coffee, tea, fruits, vegetables and other foods and beverages.

Caffeinated beverages have a diuretic effect, causing the body to eliminate fluid. Researchers are unsure how much of an impact this diuretic effect has on the body's fluid balance. A conservative approach is to count fluid only from non-caffeinated sources.

How Much Fluid?

Individual needs for water vary depending upon physical activity, age, climate, medications, food choices, and physical condition. There isn't a standard recommended daily allowance for water; however, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies recommends 91 ounces of total fluid intake per day for women and 125 ounces per day for men. Another method used to estimate the base number of ounces of water your body requires each day is weight (in pounds) divided by two. Add additional fluid if you exercise for extended periods of time or are in a hot or dry climate. For healthy people, in their typical day-to-day situation, thirst is usually a reliable indicator that they need to drink fluid.

Dehydration

Dehydration is the loss of water (and essential electrolytes) needed for normal body functioning. In a dehydrated state, the body cannot cool itself or carry on any other important functions that rely on proper fluid balance. Signs of dehydration can include thirst, nausea, dry mouth, lightheadedness, fatigue, heat intolerance, low urine output, dark urine color, loss of appetite, and muscle cramps or spasms. Low intake of water has been associated with some chronic diseases, although the evidence is not conclusive.

Keeping Hydrated After Bariatric Surgery

Following bariatric surgery, it is very important to sip fluids throughout the day and track fluid intake to insure that a minimum of 64 oz is consumed. Thirst at this time is not a good indicator of hydration status and cannot be relied upon. To prevent dehydration, obtain at least the minimum amount of fluid from any clear or full liquid (depending upon your diet progression) and monitor urine to maintain a light color.

To obtain adequate fluid, keep a glass with you at all times and sip continuously, try fluid with different temperatures, and drink things that you enjoy. You do not have to drink water. In fact, you may drink more of a lightly-flavored fluid. Try a no-added-sugar non-carbonated drink like Propel® or Fruit2O® for ready-to-drink convenience. Make up your own Kool-Aid® by adding an unsweetened packet to 2 quarts of water and then using a small amount of Splenda® to sweeten to taste. After your body has recuperated from surgery it will be easy to meet your fluid requirements if you are in the habit of sipping throughout the day. Tips for keeping hydrated during your workouts:

- For walks of an hour or less, plain or no-added-sugar flavored water is the best choice.
- For walks longer than an hour, eat a small amount of a salty food, such as pretzels or saltine crackers, to help with water absorption and the replacement of salt and energy.
- Drink 16 oz of fluid 2-3 hours prior to your workout.
- Replace lost fluids during your workout, drinking up to 8 oz every 20 minutes.
- If you are sweating more than usual, drink more.
- End your workout with a tall glass of water.

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