

## Are you well-hydrated?

There was a time when people left the house without water bottles or any worry about that lack, when thirst was remedied by what flowed from the well or the tap, and not another thought was given to the subject. Things have changed. Now many of us grab a bottle every time we head out the door, and some of those bottles are high-tech, branded, crystal-embedded, or filled with water from the other side of the planet. Is all that really necessary? How much time, money, energy, and worry should we actually be spending on our hydration?



As you may remember from middle-school science, our bodies are mostly water. This means that every organ, all our tissues, and every single cell needs enough water to work correctly.

### Water is needed for:

- Making saliva, and proper digestion
- Regulating body temperature
- Getting rid of waste products and preventing constipation
- Cushioning bones and lubricating joints so they can move more smoothly
- Balancing the chemicals that your body produces. In particular, your brain uses water to make hormones and neurotransmitters.
- Functioning as a shock absorber for your brain and spinal cord, and, if pregnant, your fetus. (Remember, lactating increases water needs too!)
- Keeping you cool. Sweat is mostly water, and when it evaporates, it cools the tissues beneath it.

### Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when you lose more water than you take in, and your body no longer has enough fluids to work properly. Children most often become dehydrated if they've been throwing up or having diarrhea. Older people may have physical conditions or take medications that make dehydration more likely. But dehydration can happen to anyone, at any time, if they don't drink enough water.

### Symptoms

Unfortunately, thirst isn't always a reliable signal that you need to drink some water. Many people don't feel thirsty until they're already dehydrated. [Signs and symptoms](#) differ by age:

#### In adults:

- Thirst (sometimes)
- Fatigue
- Less frequent urination
- Dizziness
- Dark-colored urine
- Confusion

#### In babies and young children:

- Dry mouth and tongue
- Sunken soft spot on top of skull
- No tears when crying
- Listlessness or irritability
- Sunken eyes, cheeks
- No wet diapers for three hours

### Take hydration seriously...

Because the [complications of dehydration](#) can be dangerous:

- **Heat injury.** If you've been exercising vigorously and sweating a lot, but not drinking enough fluid, you could develop a "heat injury." This can range in severity from mild heat cramps, to heat exhaustion, or even to potentially life-threatening heatstroke.
- **Urinary and kidney problems.** If you're repeatedly dehydrated or dehydrated for an extended time, this can lead to urinary tract infections, kidney stones, or even kidney failure.
- **Seizures.** Losing too much fluid, either from throwing up, having diarrhea, or sweating heavily, can upset your electrolyte balance. Electrolytes (such as potassium and sodium) help carry electrical signals from cell to cell. If they're out of whack, your normal electrical messages can get scrambled. This can lead to involuntary muscle contractions or loss of consciousness.
- **Low blood volume shock** (hypovolemic shock). This is one of the most serious, and possibly life-threatening, dangers of dehydration. Loss of fluids means not enough blood volume. This causes a drop in blood pressure and a drop in the amount of oxygen in your body.



Taking care of ourselves can take a lot of support. We're here to help!  
Ask a nurse or provider if you'd like to talk. 218-387-2330

...but you don't have to go overboard.

You don't need:

#### \* **Expensive gear and gizmos**

You don't need wearable devices, sweat-analyzing patches, or urine test strips. Bottles don't have to be bedazzled, synced to your phone, or have flashing LEDs. If they're clean, safe, and reusable - that's good enough.

#### \* **Exotic water**

There's no benefit to be had by drinking bottled water from Fiji, France, or La Fayette. In fact, there are [huge costs](#) both to you and to the environment. Bottled water is about 3,000% percent more expensive per gallon than tap water, and "generally is no cleaner, or safer, or healthier... In fact, the federal government requires far more rigorous and frequent safety testing and monitoring of municipal drinking water." There are also substantial negative environmental impacts to bottled water: Eighty-six percent of plastic water bottles become garbage, and the shipping of all those bottles contributes to escalating levels of pollution.

#### \* **Extra Additives**

Most people, most of the time, don't need water with added vitamins, minerals, herbs, or electrolytes. The exception—if you've been doing a lot of sweating, throwing up, or having diarrhea. Then replacing those electrolytes is important.

But beware—[sports drinks](#) have spent a lot on marketing themselves as the go-to answer for your everyday hydration needs. Just know that many of them also contain a fair amount of calories because they are sweetened with sugar. Combine that with the citric or other acids that they often are made with, and these drinks can spell trouble for your tooth enamel.

#### \* **Excessive Amounts**

If some water is good, then gallons must be great, right!? Not really. There's no benefit to hydrating beyond adequate levels, and how much a person needs depends on 3 things:

1. Your body weight - Bigger people need more water.
2. The temperature - Hotter weather makes you sweat.
3. Physical Activity - Exercise makes you sweat too.

**The upshot: Being well-hydrated is important for your health, and getting that way should be easy on you, your wallet, and the planet!**

**Two ways that you can tell if you're well-hydrated:**

1. Time—Are you peeing every 2 –3 hours?
2. Color—Is your urine pale to clear? (Keep in mind that urine color can also be impacted by food, supplements, or medication.)

If you answered "NO" to these questions, it's probably time to up your water intake.

### Helpful Hydration Hints



1. If you find yourself forgetting to drink, try setting a timer.
2. Not a fan of plain water? Increase your hydration by:
  - Having a cup of tea. Either iced or hot is fine, as long as any caffeine doesn't harm your sleep.
  - Eating juicy foods: watermelon, celery, oranges, tomatoes, cucumbers, grapefruit...
  - Popping open a can of fizzy or sparkling water
  - Having a bowl of soup
  - Experimenting with infusions - It doesn't take much to add a tasty little zip! Only make one day's worth at a time to prevent soggy fruit, and be aware that citrus and other acidic ingredients can soften tooth enamel. Limit their intake and avoid brushing your teeth right after drinking.

Tasty combos to try:

- ✓ Cucumber, Lemon & Basil
- ✓ Pear, Ginger & Lime
- ✓ Orange & Mint
- ✓ Grapefruit & Thyme
- ✓ Apple & Lemon
- ✓ Orange & Rosemary
- ✓ Any Berry & Mint
- ✓ Lemon or Lime & Ginger
- ✓ Pineapple & Rosemary
- ✓ Cantaloupe & Cucumber

**Mix and Match to your heart's content!**

