

Hydration: Why It's So Important

While plain water is best for staying hydrated, other drinks and foods can help, too. Fruit and vegetable juices, milk, and herbal teas add to the amount of water you get each day.

However, it's best to limit caffeinated drinks. Caffeine may cause some people to urinate more frequently or feel anxious or jittery. Plus, be mindful of what you drink. Some choices may add extra calories from sugar to your diet.

Water can also be found in fruits and vegetables (for example, watermelon, tomatoes, and lettuce), and in soup broths.

Sports drinks can be helpful if you're planning on exercising at higher than normal levels for more than an hour. They contain carbohydrates and electrolytes that can increase your energy. They help your body absorb water. However, some sports drinks are high in calories from added sugar. They also may contain high levels of sodium (salt). Check the serving size on the label. One bottle usually contains more than one serving. Some sports drinks contain caffeine, too. Remember that a safe amount of caffeine to consume each day is no more than 400 milligrams.

If staying hydrated is difficult for you, here are some tips that can help:

- Keep a bottle of water with you during the day. To reduce your costs, carry a reusable water bottle and fill it with tap water.
- If you don't like the taste of plain water, try adding a slice of lemon or lime to your drink.
- Drink water before, during, and after a workout.
- When you're feeling hungry, drink water. Thirst is often confused with hunger. True hunger will not be satisfied by drinking water. Drinking water may also contribute to a healthy weight-loss plan. Some research suggests that drinking water can help you feel full.
- If you have trouble remembering to drink water, drink on a schedule. For example, drink water when you wake up, at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and when you go to bed. Or, drink a small glass of water at the beginning of each hour.
- Drink water when you go to a restaurant. It will keep you hydrated, and it's free.

There are other signs that can signal you may be dehydrated. They include:

Little or no urine

Headaches/confusion

Urine that is darker than usual

Confusion

Dry mouth

Dizziness or lightheadedness

Sleepiness or fatigue

No tears when crying

Extreme thirst