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## Why you should drink more water

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The body needs water to function. Many parts of the body contain water, including the brain, blood and lean muscle. Water in the body serves to:

- regulate body temperature
- remove wastes (through urine and stool)
- carry nutrients (food) and oxygen to cells
- cushion joints and
- dissolve nutrients to make them available to the body

Water does not contain any calories. The body absorbs water through the stomach and gut. Water leaves the body through urine, sweat, and stool and at times, vomiting and diarrhea.

It is important to balance the amount of water going in to the body with the amount of water being lost by the body. This is especially important for persons who are:

- very young
- elderly
- ill with fever, vomiting or diarrhea
- taking medications that cause the body to lose water
- exercising
- living in hot, humid, dry or high altitude climates and
- traveling on a long airplane trip

How much water should you drink? That depends on your age, what you eat, your level of activity, the weather, your health, whether you are a man or woman and what medications you take. Elderly persons may have a decreased sense of thirst. Solid food contains water, so it is important to eat a balanced diet. Other beverages, such as milk, juice and soup, also contain some water. Drink 6 to 8 eight-ounce glasses of water, or other fluids, or half of the body weight in ounces each day as part of a healthy diet. It is important to limit how much soda, caffeine and alcohol you drink. Soda contains sugar and empty calories. Caffeine and alcohol can cause the body to lose water. You may need to increase your fluids if you are exercising or spending time in hot or humid weather. Men usually require more water than women do because they have more lean muscle. Persons taking certain medications or with some chronic diseases may have to restrict their water intake.

For healthy children and adults who eat a balanced diet, drinking water with each meal and between meals will meet the body's need for water. The healthy body can regulate the balance of water. A quick way to check that you are getting enough fluids is to look at the color of your urine. The urine should be pale yellow. If your urine is dark yellow and has a strong odor or if you go to the bathroom less than 4 times a day, you probably need to drink more fluids.

Talk with your healthcare provider about how much water you need daily.

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