

Guidelines for drinking fluids to stay hydrated

Fluids come from the beverages you drink and the foods that you eat. This handout will focus on the fluids you drink to stay hydrated.

How much fluid you need every day depends on your age, sex and activity level. Hot and humid weather can increase your needs.

To keep your body hydrated, aim for a fluid intake of about:

- 3 L (12 cups) for men 19 years old and over each day
- 2.2 L (9 cups) for women 19 years old and over each day.

Fluids include water and other beverages such as milk, juice, broth or soups, coffee and tea. Water is one of the best fluid choices, but it is a myth that you need 8 cups a day to stay healthy.

Fluid helps you stay healthy and energized. It also:

- controls your body temperature
- aids digestion
- carries nutrients around your body
- cushions organs and joints
- gets rid of waste
- keeps your bowels regular

Your body loses water by sweating, breathing and getting rid of waste. If you lose more fluid than you take in you can get dehydrated.

What are the signs and symptoms of dehydration?

Signs and symptoms of mild hydration include:

- thirst
- dry lips and mouth
- flushed skin
- tiredness
- irritability



- headache
- dizziness
- fainting
- low blood pressure
- increase in heart rate
- dark, strong smelling urine
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Signs of severe dehydration include:

- blue lips
- blotchy skin
- confusion
- lack of energy
- cold hands and feet
- rapid breathing
- high fever
- unconsciousness.

You can become dehydrated even before signs appear. Therefore, it is important to drink fluids regularly, even before you feel thirsty.

Tip: If your urine is light yellow and clear it usually means that you are getting enough to drink. Dark yellow, strong smelling urine is a sign of dehydration

Steps You Can Take

Follow these tips to stay hydrated:

- Drink a glass of water when you wake up each morning or before you go to bed.
- Keep a fresh glass of water by your desk or on hand where you work.
- Carry a container of water with you throughout the day.
- Drink a glass of water before eating your meals.
- Make sure you have a drink with each meal such as a glass of low fat milk, soy beverage or water.
- Don't ignore thirst. Drink water or another healthy drink when you feel thirsty.



Fluids to Choose From	Tips
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water is calorie free and a great way to quench your thirst. • Add a slice of lemon or lime to make it more refreshing. • Drink tap water. You don't need to drink bottled water. • If you drink well water it should be tested regularly.
Fruit or Vegetable Juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit your intake of fruit juices since they are high in calories and low in fibre. • Eat the fruit instead. • 125 mL (½ cup) of juice is a serving of fruits and vegetables. Make sure you choose 100% real fruit juice. • Avoid fruit 'drinks', 'cocktails', 'punches' or 'beverages' as they have sugar added and less nutrients.
Milk/Fortified Soy or Rice Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim for 500 mL (2 cups) of low fat milk or alternatives (less than 2% M.F.) as part of your fluid intake for the day.
Soft Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose soft drinks less often. Regular soft drinks are high in calories and sugar and low in nutrients. Some soft drinks, such as colas, may also contain caffeine. • Diet soft drinks are calorie and sugar free but may still have caffeine.



<p>Broth and Soups</p>	<p>Broth and broth-based soups can be a good source of fluid. However, most canned or dehydrated broths or soups are high in sodium (salt).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try making your own or choose prepared broths or soups lower in sodium.
<p>Sport Drinks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport drinks are usually not needed to keep hydrated when you exercise. Water and a healthy diet will replace water and minerals lost during exercise. If you exercise very hard, in extreme weather, for a long time or wear a lot of sports equipment you may benefit from a sports drink. For more information on sports hydration, see the Additional Resources below.
<p>Tea and Coffee (e.g. herbal tea, regular and decaffeinated coffee/tea)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffees and teas are not dehydrating. Limit caffeine intake to about 400 mg per day. That is equal to 750 mL (3 cups) of black coffee or 1 L (4 cups) of black tea per day. Drink herbal teas or decaf coffee if you want to have more than the recommended amount of caffeinated beverages. • Limit specialty coffees and teas. They can be high in sugar. If you are pregnant limit your caffeine intake to 500 mL (2 cups) of coffee or 750 mL (3 cups) of tea.



Steps for Special Consideration:

- If you have diarrhea or vomiting, it is easier to become dehydrated. It is important to drink fluids when you are feeling unwell. If you become dehydrated when you are sick you may need to take an oral rehydration solution. Talk to your pharmacist to find out which one would be best for you. If you have diarrhea or are vomiting and think you may be dehydrated call your provincial toll-free telehealth number or your doctor.
- During pregnancy, your body is going through many changes. You may need to drink more. Aim for 2.3 L (about 9 ½ cups) of fluid per day. Drink plenty of fluids to help prevent constipation, which is common in pregnancy.
- If you are breastfeeding, drink plenty of fluids to help maintain your milk supply. Aim for 3.1 L (12½ cups) of fluid per day. Drink a glass of water each time you breastfeed your baby to help you stay hydrated.

Additional Resources

1. EatRight Ontario, Sports Hydration
2. www.onpen.ca/Docviewer.aspx?id=7462
3. Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000