Water: Essential for Good Health

Why is water important for good health?

The body needs water to function. Our bodies are 60 to 70% water. Most parts of the body contain water, including the brain, blood, and muscle. The body needs water to:

- Control body temperature.
- Remove wastes (through urine and bowel movements).
- Carry nutrients (food) and oxygen to cells.
- Maintain fluid balance and the delicate balance of minerals.
- Cushion joints.

It is important to balance the amount of water going into the body with the amount of water being lost by the body. This is especially important if you are:

- An infant or a child
- An older adult
- Sick with fever, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Taking medicines that cause the body to lose water (such as diuretics)
- Exercising (you need to replace water you lose through sweat)
- Living in extreme climates: hot, humid, dry, or high altitude
- Traveling on a long airplane trip.

How does our body get and lose water?

The body gets water from the digestive system when you eat and drink.

Water leaves the body through:

- Breathing
- Sweat
- Urine
- Bowel movements, especially if you have diarrhea
- Vomiting.

How much water should I drink?

How much water you should drink depends on:

- Your age and body size
- What you eat (various foods contain different amounts of water)
- Your level of activity (the more active you are, the more water you need)
- The weather (the warmer the weather, the more water you need)
- Your health
- Whether you are a man or woman (men usually need more water than women do because they have more lean muscle)

- What medicines you take (some medicines cause your body to lose water, such as diuretics).

Most of the time you will get enough water if you:
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Drink fluids with each meal.
- Drink fluids between meals.

Drink more water during:
- Strenuous exercise (drink 4 to 6 ounces of water for every 15 minutes of exercise.)
- Hot weather to avoid heat stroke or heat exhaustion

If you are taking certain medicines or if you have a chronic disease, such as congestive heart failure or kidney problems, you may need to drink more or less water.

Talk with your healthcare provider about how much water you should drink every day. You may count drinks containing caffeine, like coffee and tea, in your daily water total.

How do I know if I am drinking enough water?

A healthy body can control the balance of water. A quick way to check that you are getting enough fluids is to look at the color of your urine. It should be light yellow. If your urine is dark yellow, or if you go to the bathroom fewer than 4 times a day, you may need to drink more fluids.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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