



Bottoms Up! The Importance of Staying Hydrated

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Staying hydrated is incredibly important for maintaining a healthy body. Proper hydration makes a major difference in your energy level and performance, it lubricates joints, regulates body temperature, aids the digestive system, may prevent headaches, helps your body process medication, and will get you up and moving a little more frequently. Hydration helps your body's cells function properly. It improves mood and cognition, reduces the risk of high blood pressure and high blood glucose, and possibly helps reduce body weight and overeating.

Hydration is the medium in which all of our metabolic reactions occur. It gives form to our cells, lubricates our joints and tissues, transports nutrients and waste, and dissipates excess body heat (Horswill & Janas 2011; Lang 2007). A study found that drinking 0.5 liter of water increased energy expenditure at rest by 30% for about 90 minutes (Horswill & Janas 2011). In contrast, **according to The Athletics and Fitness Association of America (AFAA), even a 2% deficit can affect mental and physical well-being.**



Because sweating is the body's primary mechanism for heat dissipation during exercise, American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends that people drink water before, during and after exercise such as you would do with Forever Fit (<http://forever-fit.net/stay-fit-with-us-2>). Inadequate hydration reduces sweat rate and increases the chance of heat related injury. It can decrease strength, endurance and coordination. A 2% body weight loss due to water loss is associated with reduced exercise performance. Checking your weight before and after exercise is a good way to ensure you have replaced lost hydration.

Dehydration leads to increased production of urea (a crystalline compound in urine), suggesting that water deprivation is accompanied by body tissue breakdown, according to AFAA. Evidence suggests a link between persistently low body water and a higher risk of chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes and kidney disease.

What to drink? Some beverages are better than others. Water is your best choice. If you will exercise vigorously, you may want to hydrate with a sports drink that contains electrolytes, sodium and potassium. Muscle cramping can occur if you are low on of electrolytes. Alcohol, juices, caffeinated beverages and soda are not the best hydration choices. These can promote dehydration and add excess chemicals, sugar and calories.

How Much Should You Drink?

A good goal for most people is to drink eight 8-oz. glasses of water daily. This number fluctuates based on age, weight, activity level and other factors. For instance, people with obesity require more fluids than non-obese individuals, owing to metabolic rate, body surface area and body weight. A best plan is to consult your doctor for your own personal daily fluid intake recommendation.

People in the senior populations over the age of 65, have a decreased total body water (TBW) amount. AFAA notes that this is partly because water is dependent on fat-free mass, so age-related muscle loss, known as sarcopenia, causes TBW levels to drop. In addition, in older adults thirst tends to be less pronounced and the kidneys become less effective at concentrating urine. For these reasons, determining hydration status becomes more difficult in seniors than in younger age groups.

Some diseases such as Parkinson's bring on excessive sweating, especially in the upper body. For this reason, replacing lost fluid is important.

It is important to note that there is the potential for overhydration. Excess fluid consumption, leading to excess TBW, does not enhance performance. This hyperhydration does not improve aerobic or anaerobic performance and can, at extremes, be fatal.

Tips for Staying Hydrated:

- **Don't wait until you are thirsty** to replenish. ACSM notes that many people think of thirst as their alarm bell for when to drink, however thirst is a delayed sensation that occurs after a person has already lost 1 to 2 liters.
- **Keep a refillable water bottle with you** at your desk, in the car, especially while exercising, or during other daily activities.
- **Purchase a special water glass** that you particularly enjoy using and keep it full during the day.
- **Add flavor to your water** with crushed watermelon, citrus fruit slices, berries or peaches.
- **Try naturally flavored, unsweetened seltzers** in place of sugar- and chemical-filled soft drinks.
- **Add more water dense fruits to your diet.** Apricots, blueberries, oranges, peaches, pineapples, plums and raspberries contain over 80% water; and melons have some of the highest water content, at more than 90%, according to nutritionist Ian Harris.
- **Monitor your urine** by checking its color. A light yellow lemonade shade reflects that you are safe and hydrated. Darker yellow to brown can reflect dehydration.
- **Weigh yourself to monitor fluid loss** before and after exercise. American Council on Exercise (ACE) recommends drinking 17 to 20-oz of fluids before exercise, 7 to 10-oz during exercise every 10-20 minutes; and after exercise 16 to 24-oz for every pound of body weight lost.
- **Eat and drink wisely** Finally, try to make sure you've fueled up with healthy food options for breakfast, lunch and a snack as well. Poor hydration and empty food choices might make you feel like you're dragging by the end of the day.



Kim Crowley works with Forever Fit (www.forever-fit.net) and has been teaching fitness with seniors since 2009. She is an ACE-certified Personal Trainer and an AFAA-certified Group Exercise Instructor. Kim has focused continuing education in exercise for people with Parkinson's Disease, including Parkinson's S.M.A.R.T. Training, Dance for PD, and Brian Grant Foundation Training. Kim is licensed to teach various Zumba® formats including Zumba® Gold. She works with a variety of clientele, ranging from youth to seniors with diverse needs including paraplegia, cancer, autism and dementia.

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