

- Drinking water

Staying hydrated important to overall health

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Drinking enough water does not just keep you from feeling thirsty. Staying properly hydrated makes your body work better and can help you feel better.

Water helps your kidneys remove waste from your blood. Water also helps your circulatory system operate more efficiently by keeping your blood vessels from constricting.

A mild case of dehydration might only make you feel tired or give you muscle cramps, but severe dehydration can lead to kidney damage. That is why when you work or exercise very hard, especially in warm and humid weather, you should drink plenty of water.

Being chronically dehydrated can increase your risk for a number of medical conditions, such as kidney stones and even chronic kidney disease. Your kidneys need water to function properly.

When should you drink water? Pretty much anytime.

HYDRATE BEFORE WORK

It's generally always easier to start the day fully hydrated rather than trying to catch up during the day.

Being hydrated when you start work makes it easier to stay hydrated throughout the day and that isn't just for people doing physical labor. Drink several cups of water when you wake up in the morning. If you start the day with a water deficit, you might not be able to drink enough to catch up, especially if you are doing physical labor in warm weather.

HYDRATE DURING WORK

Most people are already in danger of becoming dehydrated when they feel really thirsty.

When working in the heat, drink at least one cup of water every 15—20 minutes. It is easier on your body to continue drinking water rather than trying to drink more to catch up. Most people need several hours to drink enough fluids to replace what they lose through excessive sweating.

WHAT ABOUT ENERGY DRINKS?

Some energy drinks contain much more caffeine than standard servings of coffee, tea, or soft drinks. One reason that is a problem is that caffeine is a diuretic, making it likely that you will lose water through more frequent urination. Also, excess caffeine can make your heart race, which is added stress you don't want if you are already hot.

Energy drinks also may contain more sugar than soft drinks, which add calories you don't need.

ALCOHOL CAN CAUSE DEHYDRATION

Some people may not understand this. If I am drinking alcohol, how can I get dehydrated? Anyone who drinks occasionally and knows their own body should understand how this happens. Like caffeine, alcohol is a diuretic. It can cause frequent urination and depletion of water in your own body.

HOW MUCH WATER DO I REALLY NEED?

That is not as easy to answer as you might think, but a good general rule for healthy people is to aim for around a gallon of water each day, especially during warm weather. That might be more than you need, but there will likely be no detrimental side effects if you are healthy. People with medical issues such as congestive heart failure or kidney disease should consult their physician about how much water intake is healthy.