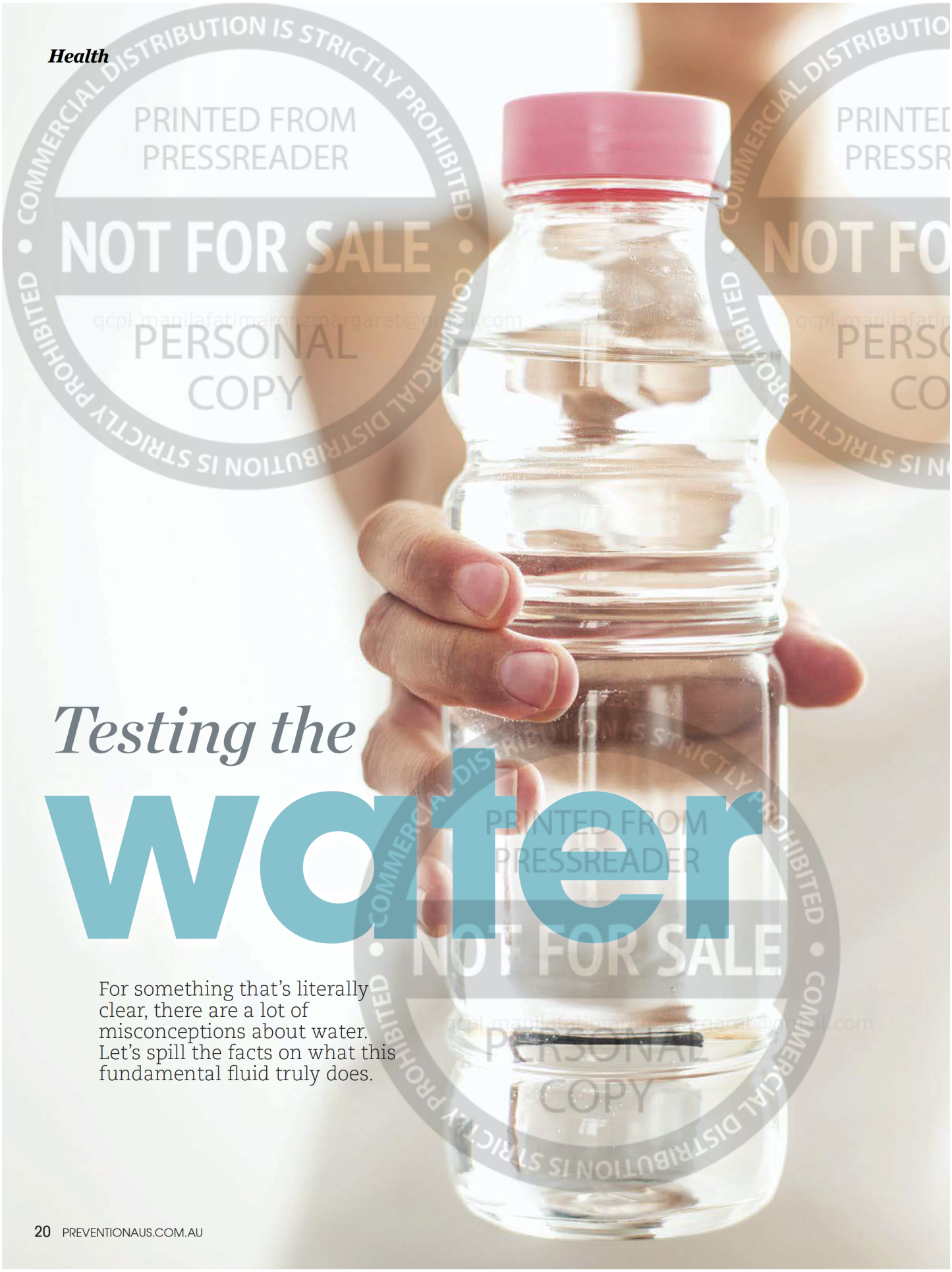
- Drinking water



Testing the water

For something that's literally clear, there are a lot of misconceptions about water. Let's spill the facts on what this fundamental fluid truly does.

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YOU NEED TO DRINK EIGHT GLASSES A DAY

NO

Not even close for most of us, says Dr Herman Pontzer, author of *Burn: The Misunderstood Science of Metabolism*, who adds that this mandate was never based on research. The body does need water throughout the day, but the amount it already gets includes liquid from food and beverages (yes, coffee counts!). And we get a cup and a half of our daily water needs from just moving around, since water is created in the body as a by-product of burning kilojoules. The rest does need to come from what we drink, but how much you require depends on your size. For most people, especially women, eight glasses is more than necessary, Dr Pontzer says. "For the most part, drink when you feel like it and you'll be fine," he advises. On hot days, or when you're working out, consume more.

CHUGGING WATER IS THE SECRET TO GLOWING SKIN

NO

Keeping a great complexion does require hydration, but once your body has a normal level, more water won't do anything for your looks. External factors affect the skin's hydration, says Dr Michael Cameron, an assistant professor of dermatology. Retaining liquid is the job of the skin's paper-thin outer layer, the stratum corneum, which can get stripped away by wind, heat, long, hot showers and too much soap or alcohol-based toner. Beyond avoiding those, applying a simple moisturiser twice a day, at least once while skin is damp after a bath or shower, is generally enough to protect that layer.

CONSUMING WATER HELPS YOU LOSE WEIGHT

YES AND NO

There's nothing magical about water's ability to peel off weight. Still, if you swap soft drinks and other sugary beverages with plain H_2O, you'll consume fewer kJs, assuming you don't make them up elsewhere. Having water with a meal can also fill you up a bit, so you might eat less.

Your body on water

Every part of the body needs water to function. If you don't get enough, you can become fatigued and irritable and run the risk of urinary tract infections or even kidney damage. A recent study found the body actually ages faster if it's chronically parched. The average adult woman is made up of 55 per cent liquid (men are 60 per cent). Here's where that water can be found and what it does:

Brain

It's 75 per cent water, so thinking and mood can be affected when this organ doesn't get the fluid it needs.

Kidneys and bladder

These organs filter and store water and flush out any excess liquid. They also conserve what's there when the body runs low on it.

Joints

Lubricated synovial fluid helps joints move, and the cartilage itself is up to 80 per cent H_2O.

Mouth

It's not just about saliva – water makes up a huge part of the mucous membranes that keep the mouth moist, too.

Lungs

The lungs are made up of more than 80 per cent water – the moisture is crucial for moving air in and out.

Bones

They may feel solid, but bones are 15 to 25 per cent water by volume, depending on your age and health.

Blood

The plasma that moves electrolytes, vitamins and hormones around the body is about 90 per cent water. P

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