

WATER FACT SHEET

Water is the body's most valuable nutrient! It plays a crucial role in all functions that occur in the body.

Water helps:

- Regulate body temperature when we are too hot or cold
- Protects our organs, tissues and joints
- Transports nutrients, oxygen, and medications
- Removes wastes and impurities
- Enhances digestion and metabolism

Water also helps increase our resistance to urinary tract infections, irregularity, pneumonia, pressure ulcers, certain cancers, and kidney stones.

Most people only get 1/3 to 1/2 of their fluid requirements each day, putting many of us at risk for mild to severe cases of dehydration.

Signs of dehydration include:

- Thirst (by the time you feel thirsty, it takes about 2 cups to replace the fluids that your body has lost)
- Dry lips, mouth, and skin
- Dark colored urine with a strong odor
- Sunken eyes; Confusion; lightheadedness; clumsiness; and fatigue

Older adults are especially at risk for dehydration because increasing age causes a loss of sensitivity to thirst, difficulty accessing fluids, difficulty swallowing, and decreased kidney function. Dehydration is one of the leading causes for hospitalizations in the elderly.

The recommendation of 8 glasses of water each day can be met by consuming plenty of liquids and foods such as:

- Fruits such as watermelon, grapes, cantaloupe, and oranges
- Veggies such as lettuce, cucumbers, and celery
- Soups and broth, juices, milk, and decaffeinated beverages

Some medical conditions have special hydration needs. Check with your physician as to what your personal fluid requirements should be.