

Are you drinking enough?

You need about six to eight cups of fluid each day to keep your body working properly. If you don't drink enough, you can get dehydrated. This can cause headaches, tiredness, and poor concentration. Severe dehydration can cause constipation and kidney stones.

What counts as fluid?

- Water – try to make at least half your fluid intake water.
- Milk or milky drinks such as smoothies made with fruit, yoghurt and milk.
- Tea and coffee – limit to five cups a day or less.
- Herbal or fruit teas.
- Soup.
- Custard.

Limit drinks that are high in calories and low in nutrition. For example:

- fizzy drinks, cordial and soft drinks
- fruit juice and fruit drinks
- sports drinks
- energy drinks
- tea and coffee with added sugar
- alcohol.



How do you know if you are having enough fluid?

The easiest way is to check the colour and amount of your urine. Except for first thing in the morning, your urine should be almost clear and there should be plenty of it. If you have dark yellow urine you aren't drinking enough.

You may need extra fluid if:

- the weather is hot and humid
- you are doing a lot of physical activity
- you are constipated, or have diarrhoea.

Tips for a good fluid intake

- Have a drinking routine. Drink a glass of water with every meal and snack.
- If you are going to be out for the day, take a water bottle with you.

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- If you don't like plain water, try mineral water (still or sparkling). You can also flavour water with lemon slices, mint leaves or a little lime cordial.
- If you take medications, take them with a full glass of water.
- Use mugs for hot drinks. Mugs hold more than cups.
- Many foods have a lot of fluid, such as soup, custard, jelly, ice blocks and juicy fruit. You can count these as part of your fluid intake.
- When you are at a restaurant, always order water for the table.

Tips if you need to pass urine often or if you have incontinence (loss of bladder control)

- Limit alcohol and drinks with caffeine such as coffee, tea, energy drinks and cola drinks. These can irritate your bladder and make you urinate more.
- Try not to drink a few hours before you go to bed.
- Continue to drink six to eight cups of fluid a day. Many people with urinary incontinence try not to drink fluids. But this only worsens incontinence because it lowers your bladder's ability to hold fluid.
- Try to go to the toilet only when you feel the urge. Going "just in case" can also lower your bladder's ability to hold fluid.
- When you urinate, try to empty your bladder as much as possible and take your time.

Talk to your general practice team for more advice.

Written by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Last reviewed October 2018.

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