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http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Water_a_vital_nutrient?open



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Water



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What is water?

Water is the most abundant compound on earth, which covers almost 70% of the planet. It is made up of two parts hydrogen and oxygen. It is a transparent, odorless, tasteless liquid that forms seas, lakes, rivers, rain, and which is the basis of the fluids of living organisms. The human body contains about 55–75% water. Water can be in a liquid, or solid (ice), or gas (vapor) form.

What are the health benefits of water?

- Keeps us hydrated
- Maintains the health and integrity of every cell in the body
- Removes toxic waste
- Carries nutrients and oxygen to cells
- Aids breathing, digestion and prevents constipation
- Lubricates and cushions joints
- Moistens mucus membranes and skin
- Regulates body temperature

Where do I get the fluid requirements from?

Water is the best fluid to maintain hydration; however, all other fluid sources can contribute to daily fluid requirements. These may include milk, 100% juice, teas, fruit drinks, coffee, soda, non-alcoholic, low sugar and sports drinks etc. These sources are not suggested as continuous choices, particularly for hydrating one's body during dehydration. These fluids require more water in the digestion process and can limit the amount of total fluid absorbed from those products. Some of those fluids may

actually increase dehydration as they may have diuretic properties. All foods can contribute to fluid total volume but foods that have high water content contribute more — such as tomatoes, melons and cucumbers, etc.

Water Recommendations

Age and gender specific adequate intakes for water were established in 2004 by the Food and Nutrition Board. The Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) for water is shown below.

DIETARY REFERENCE INTAKE	
Age	Recommendations per liter
1 – 3 years	1.3L/day or 5½ cups
4 – 8 years	1.7 L/day or 7 cups
9 – 13 years	Boys 1.7- 2.4 L/day or 7-10 cups Girls 1.7-2.1 L/day or 7-8½ cups
14 – 18 years	Boys 1.9-3.3 L/day or 7½-13½ cups Girls 1.9-2.3 L/day or 7½-9 cups
19 – 70+ years	Men 2.3-3.7 L/day or 9-15½ cups Women 1.3-2.7 L or 5½-11½ cups

World Health Organizations August 2004

Recommended intake

An individual's fluid intake varies based on the following:

- Age
- Weight
- Activity level
- Exposure to hot and humid temperature conditions
- Chronic disease
- Pregnant or breastfeeding
- Travelling
- High protein or high fiber diets
- Medication

What happens if I get too little?

- Dehydration – seen in concentrated urine that is dark yellow or orange in color
- Headaches
- Confusion
- Mood changes
- Tiredness
- Light headedness
- Dry mouth and skin
- Reduced urine production
- Constipation
- Kidney stones
- Urinary tract infections
- Increased appetite

Tips:

- To avoid dehydration sip on water throughout the day
- Drink more water on hot and humid days
- Avoid exercising in extreme heat
- Avoid caffeinated beverages that can promote dehydration
- Add lemon, limes or mint leaves to water to add variety
- Place water on your work desk to remind you to drink regularly.
- Freeze fresh fruit such as blueberries or strawberries to add flavor to water instead of ice
- Drink before you feel thirsty
- Dilute 100% juice with water
- If you are feeling hungry, drink a glass of water in case you are dehydrated