

Stay Hydrated in Warm Weather

When you are out during warm weather exercising or doing work, it is important to stay hydrated. Staying hydrated is a key part of staying healthy. Consuming an adequate amount of fluids helps to maintain body functions, including those of your heart, brain and muscles. Fluids also serve to carry nutrients to your cells, keep your temperature normal, digest food, flush bacteria from your bladder and prevent constipation.

However, when temperatures rise, getting enough fluids is even more important whether you're playing sports, traveling or just outside in the sun, according to the American Heart Association. In fact, your body needs more fluids when you are more physically active, are running a fever, or are experiencing vomiting or diarrhea.

So how much water should you be drinking daily?

Doctors at Harvard Medical School recommend that healthy people should get 30 to 50 ounces of water per day, which translates to about 4 to 6 cups or 1 to 1.5 liters.

And the U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommends that people avoid sugar-sweetened drinks from their diet overall, or at the very least, that they limit the amount of sugary drinks they consume. In addition to water, milk is also a good option to help in hydration.

You can try these tips offered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to add more water to your fluid intake:

- Infuse tap water with flavor by adding foods such as berries, cucumbers, mint leaves, lemons or limes. Slightly mashing berries and mint leaves before adding them will make the water even tastier.
- Freeze ice cube trays with berries to add to water to keep it cold.
- Freeze some freezer-safe water bottles for ice-cold water all day long.
- Choose water instead of other beverages when eating out. This not only will save you money, but you will also lower your caloric intake.
- Choose water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages, which can also help you manage your weight. Substituting water for one 20-ounce sugar-sweetened soda will save you about 240 calories.

You can also increase your fluid intake by consuming foods with high water content. In addition to helping to fulfill your fluid needs, such foods can provide needed nutrients including vitamins, minerals, protein and fiber. Nationwide, an estimated 22 percent of our water comes from our food intake, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Fruits such as watermelon, strawberries, grapefruit, cantaloupe, peaches, pineapple, cranberries, oranges, raspberries, apricots, blueberries, plums, apples, pears, cherries, grapes and bananas are high in water content.

Vegetables such as cucumbers, lettuce, zucchini, radishes, celery, tomatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, peppers, spinach, broccoli, carrots, peas and white potatoes also provide water to help you stay hydrated.

But how will you know if you are getting enough fluids? According to the Cleveland Clinic, signs of dehydration include fatigue, loss of appetite, flushed skin, heat intolerance, light-headedness, dark-colored urine and dry cough.

A great way to avoid dehydration is to consume fluids *before* you get thirsty. So remember to grab a water bottle each morning and keep it with you all day long!

Source: Ohio State Extension Chowline, CDC, and American Heart Association