

Water

Water is the most abundant substance in the human body as well as the most common substance on earth. Like oxygen, you cannot live without water. On average, body weight is 50 to 75% water or about 10-12 gallons. Water is a simple substance containing two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen (H₂O). It has no calories, but every body process needs water to function.

Water regulates your body temperature, keeping it constant at about 98.6 F. Many body processes produce heat, including any physical activity. Through perspiration, heat escapes from your body as water evaporates on your skin.

- Water transports nutrients and oxygen to your cells and carries waste products away.
- Water helps with the digestion of foods.
- Water moistens body tissues such as those in your mouth, eyes and nose.
- Water is the main part of every body fluid including blood, stomach juices and urine.
- Water helps cushion your joints and protects your body's organs and tissues.

Of all the nutrients in the body, water is the most abundant. Water and other beverages are the main sources. But you also eat quite a bit of water in solid foods. Juicy fruits and vegetables such as celery, lettuce, tomatoes and watermelon contain more than 90% water. Even dry foods such as bread supply some water.

The average adult loses about two quarts of water daily through perspiration, urination, bowel movements and even breathing. One and one-half cups of water is lost just through breathing. **Most people need 8 to 12 cups of water daily from drinking water and other beverages.**

When we are really active outside in the hot weather we need to be especially careful to avoid dehydration. No matter what you do - biking, running, swimming, walking or just playing outside - make sure you get enough fluids.

- Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after activity. Carry a water bottle especially if you do not have a water source available.
- Drink fluids by schedule (every fifteen minutes) even when you do not feel thirsty.
- Wear light colored clothing.
- Be especially careful if you exercise in warm, humid weather.
- Signs of dehydration are flushed skin, fatigue, increased body temperature and increased breathing and pulse rate.