
Oh! The Breath in Water!

To Drink or Not To Drink!

Tracy Boyd



I hope you take care of you first! How much water have you had today? What goes on inside of the body with the water you consume?

- It transports nutrients
- It gives tissues their structure
- It lubricates
- It assists in regulating body temperature
- It helps with respiration
- It prevents constipation
- It washes away toxins

Plenty of water helps maintain hydration, which helps prevent:

- Pressure ulcers
- Urinary tract infections
- Kidney stones
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Cognitive impairment
- Falls
- Poor oral health
- Skin conditions

Water has the ability to reduce cancer risks by washing carcinogenic substances from the body before they reach tissues. Harvard researchers did a long-term study using over 48,000 male health professionals who drank at least 6 cups of water daily and found that their risk for bladder cancer was reduced by 51 percent. This comparison was made to those who only drank 1 cup daily. Water has so many benefits. Water sustains life and is a great part of our lives. Metaphorically speaking, it breathes and lives.

Men have a reduced risk of coronary heart disease by 46 percent with proper hydration and women reduce the risk by 59 percent. Diluted urine helps prevent the

crystallization of stone-forming salts that cause kidney stones. Diluting bile helps prevent gallstone formation because it stimulates the gall bladder for elimination.

Drinking water can also help manage diabetes. It helps inhibit the development of diabetic ketoacidosis during insulin deficiency in those with type 1 diabetes and assists in maintaining healthy blood sugar levels.

Water makes up 60 percent of a male's weight and 40 percent of a female's weight. The brain is 75 percent water and many other organs have water, which makes up much of their weight.

How can you tell if your body is dehydrated?

Answer: When you feel thirsty. Being dehydrated means losing 1 percent of body weight due to fluid loss. However, when you become thirsty, you have already lost up to 2 percent. Therefore, it is not good to wait for the thirst. Just 10 percent of mild dehydration could affect mental performance such as concentration, memory, attention and reaction time.

Biologically speaking, we need water to replace what we lose. We lose water when we sweat. Medications, the condition of our kidneys, fluid intake and diet are factors that determine how much water the body loses. Water is also lost when we exhale air. There is more than one way to get water into the body.

We can get water from many fruits and vegetables because many are 80 to 90 percent water, while other foods contain approximately 20 percent water. Water is in many fluids, but water by itself is beneficial because it is filling and calorie-free. It is especially good to drink water before a meal for a decreased appetite during weight loss goals.

Water can increase the metabolic rate and increase energy. Evidence suggests that water helps break down fat. It is suggested that you regulate water intake for quality health.

Elderly people often lose their thirst sensation along with people who suffer with certain illnesses, so it is important to encourage them to drink water with meals and between meals. It is also important to drink water with diuretics such as alcohol, coffee, and tea because these fluids dehydrate the body. Because dehydration causes deterioration in the mental state, it is a risk factor for falls among the elderly along with dizziness and fainting.

It is hard to pinpoint exactly how much water your body needs because of the factors involved with how much you lose and how much you consume. As usual, too much of anything is not recommended, including water. Some recommend that you drink 6 cups of water daily and some suggest 8 cups. What about somewhere in between? Ahhhh! How refreshing that might be? It is important to maintain healthy hydration to prevent health risks.

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References

Drink to good health. (2007). *Nursing Standard*, 22(2), 17-21.

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