

Ask Leyla: How much water should I be drinking every day?



Q: I hear a lot about how important it is to be hydrated, but I'm not always sure if I'm drinking enough to make sure that happens.

What is your recommendation for how much water I should be drinking in order to be properly hydrated?

A: This is a great question and it depends on a lot of things.

According to the CDC, daily fluid intake—which is total water—is defined as the amount of water consumed from foods, plain drinking water and other beverages. The guidelines can vary by age, sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding status.

Pure filtered water is the beverage of choice because, unlike fruit juice, sodas, sports drinks or milk, it has zero calories. It's terrific for weight management when substituted for caloric beverages. Drinking around eight 8-ounce cups of pure water every day is the general recommendation. But due to the varying amounts of water we get from foods—particularly vegetables and fruit, you won't need to drink the same amount every day.

Another thing to consider when determining how much water to consume is prescription and over the counter medications. Many meds can cause dry mouth, and diuretics which are often used with blood pressure drugs are dehydrating. This may explain why we see more cases of dehydration in the elderly than in younger people. They are likely on multiple meds. Moreover, the ability to sense thirst decreases as we age, making this population particularly vulnerable.

Caffeinated beverages cause water loss. For every cup of coffee or tea you drink, help yourself to a glass of water.

Water is essential to all life. While we could conceivably live over a month without food, we couldn't live a week without water. Folks who don't drink enough water experience some level of dehydration, causing symptoms like fuzzy thinking, constipation, mood changes, kidney stones and decreased body temperature regulation – you can't perspire and cool off!

So to avoid dehydration, always satisfy your thirst. The best way is with water.

To your health!