

NUTRITION NEWS

Why is Hydration Important



First, let's define hydration and explain its importance. Simply put, being hydrated means having enough water in your body to function properly. This may seem obvious, but as we age and the seasons change, the importance of proper hydration only increases.

Now, why is having enough water important? Water plays many critical roles within our body. First, it helps regulate our body temperature. Water helps absorb and distribute heat throughout our body and cools our body when it is overheating. Water also keeps our joints lubricated, reducing inflammation by keeping our bones and joints from rubbing against one another. Additionally, water is vital in delivering nutrients that help maintain our organs and body function.

You might ask, "How do I know if I am hydrated enough?" While lack of hydration, or dehydration, can be a severe issue, there are many warning signs to help prevent it. Early symptoms of dehydration include:

- Dark-colored urine or urinating less frequently
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Dry mouth
- Fatigue or feeling weak/lack of coordination
- Muscle cramps

Dehydration can lead to many life-threatening complications like urinary tract infections (UTIs), heat stroke, and heart or kidney problems. Being dehydrated can also increase our risk of infection or our ability to recover or heal from injury quickly.

How can we make sure we are meeting our water needs each day? First, choose foods with higher water content, like watermelon, cucumbers, lettuce, strawberries, tomatoes, or celery. Soups, broths, and stews are excellent ways to increase fluid consumption. Consider trying a cold soup or drinking a cup of chilled bone broth during these hot months. Drinking 9-12 glasses of water daily can become dull, so consider adding berries, mint, or some other flavors, such as lemon, cucumber, fresh fruits, or citrus, to your water. Additionally, consider setting a timer to remind you to drink water every few hours or carrying a reusable water bottle while you're out and about or as you go from room to room in your living space.

Remember, you're not alone in this journey. If you have any questions or concerns about your hydration, your physician or registered dietitian is always there to provide guidance and support. Their expertise can help you make informed decisions about your health and well-being.

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Sources: National Council on Aging,
Harvard School of Public Health