

Meeting Your Hydration Needs



Hydration is a critical part of your overall health. Getting enough fluids will help you maintain appropriate cellular function, maintain appropriate internal temperature, and help your body get rid of waste.

When we're not drinking enough, symptoms may include brain fog, difficulty concentrating, and a reduction in mental and physical performance. Plus, some people's bodies may confuse thirst for hunger, meaning that if they're thirsty, they may end up overeating instead.

Figuring out your overall hydration needs

While there are many factors that go into how much fluid you need per day, however, here is a general equation to give you a starting point:

Your body weight x 0.5 = ounces water per day

Example: 150 pounds x 0.5 = 75 ounces water per day

Environmental and physical factors affecting your fluid needs

Your fluid needs increase when:

1. Environmental temperature increases. For every 10-degree increase in temperature above 80 degrees, consider adding in about 10 ounces of fluids.

2. Dry weather (and altitude). When the weather is very dry, we lose more fluids via respiration (breathing). This is called Insensible Water Loss, because we can't 'sense' it happening like we can sense sweating. Be sure to boost your fluid intake when the weather is dry.

3. Fever. Increases in body temperature, such as during a fever, will also increase your hydration needs.

4. Pregnancy or breastfeeding. Pregnancy increases fluid needs by about 8-16 ounces per day, while breastfeeding increases fluid needs by up 16-20 ounces per day.

5. Diet. If you're not eating a lot of vegetables and fruit, your fluid needs increase as these are big contributors to your total hydration. Depending on how many servings you get per day (if any) increase fluids by 8 to 12 ounces.

Exercise and hydration

During exercise your muscles generate over 20 times more heat (energy) than at rest, and the only way to release this heat is through sweating. As you can see, this greatly impacts your fluid needs!

On top of your daily fluid intake, you should be consuming about 6-8 ounces per 15 to 20 minutes of exercise.

So, if you exercise for 60 minutes, you'll need to add in anywhere from 18 to 32 ounces of water depending on how hot it is, your workout intensity, and your body weight.

Continuing with the 60-minute workout example: If you don't want to drink during your workout, aim to drink 2 cups (16 oz) of water 90 minutes before your workout and then 2 cups (16 oz) of water (perhaps with some added electrolytes if it was a hot or intense workout) within 90 minutes after your workout.
