

The Importance of Being Hydrated – by KI5MA

Staying hydrated is a simple yet critical part of maintaining good health. But most people just aren't getting the fluids they need every day. In fact, research shows 75% of Americans are chronically dehydrated.

As we age, drinking enough water is even more important. Dehydration is common among older adults, occurring in up to 28% of this population.¹ Adults 60 and older are at greater risk for dehydration for a number of reasons, including natural drops in thirst levels and body composition changes. Older adults are also more likely to take diuretics and other medications that cause fluid loss in the body.

If you're struggling to drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day—the amount recommended by many health experts—here are 10 great reasons to stay hydrated.

1. Improved brain performance

Even mild dehydration—as little as 2% fluid loss—can affect [memory](#), mood, concentration, and reaction time. Adding just a few glasses of water to your daily intake can have a positive effect on [cognition](#), stabilize your emotions, and even combat feelings of anxiety. This is especially important for older adults who are at higher risk for both dehydration and impaired cognitive function.

2. Digestive harmony

Your body needs water in order to digest food properly. Without enough, you may experience irregular bowel movements, gas, bloating, heartburn, and other discomforts that can hurt your quality of life. When you make it a point to stay hydrated, it can help get things moving in the right direction again. Water aids in breaking down soluble fiber from your diet to keep your digestion process on track. Mineral water is especially beneficial—look for products enriched with sodium and magnesium.

3. More energy

Dehydration can slow down circulation and affect the flow of oxygen to your brain. A lack of fluids can also cause your heart to [work harder](#) to pump oxygen all throughout your body. All of that expended energy can make you feel tired, sluggish, and less focused. When you stay hydrated by drinking more H₂O, you'll prevent dehydration and have more pep to get you through the day.

4. Weight loss and weight management

Since it provides a sense of fullness, water can help you feel satisfied in between meals—instead of heading to the snack cupboard. It can also help boost your metabolism. Consider this:

- One [study](#) of women with excess weight found that drinking additional glasses of water before each meal resulted in substantial reductions in body weight, body mass index, and body composition.²
- According to [another study](#), adults who upped their water intake by just 1% consumed fewer calories. They also reduced their overall intake of sugar, cholesterol, sodium, and saturated fat.³
- Another analysis found that increasing daily water intake, replacing caloric beverages with water, and drinking water before a meal all led to weight loss averaging 5%.⁴

5. Decreased joint pain

Did you know the cartilage in our joints contains approximately 80% water? Staying hydrated [helps your joints](#) stay well-lubricated, which helps reduce friction by creating more of a "cushion" between the bones. Less friction means smoother-moving joints and fewer aches and pains.

6. Better temperature regulation

Research shows that when you're dehydrated, your body stores more heat. This in turn [lowers your ability](#) to tolerate hot temperatures. Hydrating with plenty of water helps you produce sweat when you're overheated during activity, which in turn cools your body down. This built-in cooling mechanism is critical in preventing heat stroke and other potentially deadly heat-related conditions.

7. Kidney stone prevention

Kidney stones are clumps of mineral crystals that form in the urinary tract. If you've ever experienced one, you know how painful they can be. Staying hydrated with plenty of water can help dilute the concentration of minerals in your urinary tract and [make stones less likely](#). Water also helps flush harmful bacteria from your bladder and can aid in preventing urinary tract infections (UTIs).

8. Healthier heart

Your blood is made up largely of H₂O. When you don't drink enough glasses of water, it becomes concentrated, which can cause an imbalance of vital minerals (electrolytes). These minerals, like potassium and sodium, are key to the proper functioning of your heart.

9. Improved detoxification

Sufficient water intake supports your body's natural detoxification systems, which [remove waste](#) and harmful substances through urination, breathing, perspiration, and bowel movements. Hydrating with plenty of water supports your own powerful, built-in detox processes and can help enhance your overall health.

10. Fewer headaches

Even a mild fluid loss can cause the brain to contract away from the skull, leading to [headaches](#) and migraines in some people. Staying hydrated may help keep head pain in check.

5 tips on how to stay hydrated

If you want to [prevent dehydration](#), it's as easy as incorporating more water and water-rich foods into your diet. Here are some tips:

- [Eight glasses](#) a day is an easy rule to remember and a good general target. You can also use the body weight formula: take one-third of your body's weight and drink that number of ounces in fluids. For example, if you weigh 150 pounds, aim to drink 50 ounces of water each day.
- When you feel thirsty (if not before), drink. Make it a point to drink a big glass of water with every meal.
- Focus your hydration strategy on water or low-calorie beverages like sparkling water, plain coffee or tea, or flavored water.
- Carry a large, reusable water bottle with you throughout the day and refill it as needed with clean drinking water.
- Certain [situations](#) will require you to drink more water to maintain good hydration. These include physical activity and exercise, hot and/or humid weather, and occasions when you are vomiting or have diarrhea.