



# Drink Adequate Water

## CHALLENGE

Drink 6 glasses of water daily.

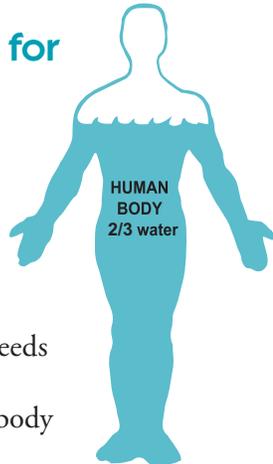


## Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Why water is important for your health" and "How much water?"
2. To complete the Challenge, drink 6 glasses of water on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

## Why water is important for your health

Nearly two-thirds of your body weight is water. That water is essential for life and a healthy, functioning body.



### Water...

- ✓ Helps you think (Your brain is three-quarters water and needs water to work efficiently.)
- ✓ Moves nutrients around the body
- ✓ Regulates your temperature
- ✓ Flushes impurities out of your body via your kidneys
- ✓ Improves circulation (Blood is 80% water.)
- ✓ Helps lubricates your joints, keeping them flexible
- ✓ Improves exercise performance (Muscles are three-quarters water and don't work well when dehydrated.)
- ✓ Keeps your skin soft and beautiful
- ✓ Helps your intestines remove waste, which reduces the risk of constipation
- ✓ Helps prevent fatigue
- ✓ Can aid in weight loss (Drinking water helps you feel full so you don't eat as much.)

Water is to your body what oil is to your car's engine. You can't function without it. Even a small water deficit (just 2%) can cause memory problems, cloud your ability to reason, make it difficult for your eyes to focus, and contribute to fatigue. Chronic inadequate water levels can lead to a variety of health problems, including headaches, constipation, kidney stones, and impaired circulation. In hot conditions, heat exhaustion and heat stroke can occur with physical exertion.

A person can survive without food for several weeks or even months. But without water for just one day, the body begins to shut down. Going a week or so without water would cause death.

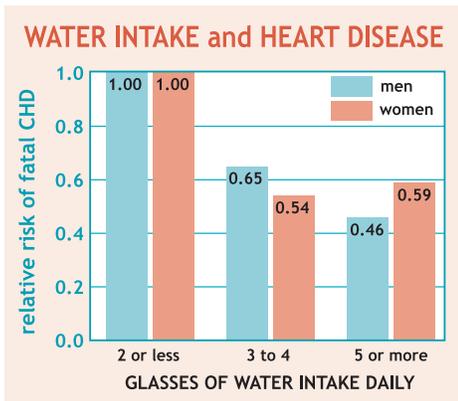
### Reduce the risk of disease

Adequate water reduces the risk for certain cancers. The Department of Nutrition at Harvard University studied more than 47,000 healthy men to see if there was a relationship between water intake and risk of bladder cancer. After 10 years, the researchers found that men who drank 6 or more glasses of water daily cut their risk of bladder cancer in half, compared to men who drank very little water. Drinking plenty of water is one good way to keep your kidneys and bladder in good health.

Adequate water also reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke. When a person doesn't drink adequate water, the blood becomes thicker, sluggish, and more likely to clot. Loma Linda University researchers looked at water intake and the risk of heart attacks. They found that, compared to those who drank 2 glasses of water a day, women who drank at least 5 glasses of water a day cut their risk of heart attack by 41%. The risk was reduced by half (54%) in men. This is a remarkable difference.

One positive way to prevent a heart attack is to drink plenty of water. The Loma Linda study also found that drinking soft drinks and coffee did not protect people against heart attack.





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The Institute of Medicine recommends that women should get the equivalent of 91 ounces of water – from beverages and foods – each day, and that men should get about 125 ounces daily. While foods high in water, such as fruit, fruit juices, and soups, can help supply some of your body’s need for liquid, you still need to drink water. Caffeinated and alcoholic beverages are not recommended for hydration because they have a diuretic affect and don’t have the same benefits as water.

Here are some ways to increase your water intake:

- Drink a glass of water when you first get up in the morning, in the evening when you get home, and again before you go to bed at night.
- Keep a bottle of water beside your desk at work. Drink often throughout the day.
- Drink before, during, and after any physical activity, such as walking, hiking, or biking.
- Carry water with you when you travel. Drink often when flying, as the cabin air is very dry.
- If your water doesn’t taste good, add a lemon or lime slice to improve the flavor. You can filter your water and keep a pitcher in the fridge. Or, buy bottled water if the improved taste helps you drink more.

The Institute of Medicine reports that most people get adequate water by letting thirst be their guide. A simple way to see if you are drinking enough water is to check your urine. If it’s dark and smells, you need more water. If it’s nearly clear or light yellow, you are doing great.

## How much water?

It doesn’t happen often, but you can drink too much water. Adequate water is important for your health, but drinking twice as much isn’t better. Too much water dilutes the body’s electrolytes and can cause serious problems – even death.

But when exercising, you do need to increase your water intake. When exercising at a moderate level, drink a glass of water every 30 minutes. (One glass of water is 1 cup, or 8 ounces.) When exercising vigorously, plan on drinking about 4 glasses of water for every 1,000 calories you burn. Some pedometers can tell you when you’ve reached that level. In physical endurance events lasting 90 minutes or more, sport drinks with electrolytes seem to be beneficial and help keep the body hydrated even better than water alone. You also need to drink more water at high altitudes and when the weather is hotter than you are accustomed to.

### Sources:

- Jeffrey Utz, M.D., *Neuroscience, pediatrics, Allegheny University. MadSci Library. [www.MadSci.org](http://www.MadSci.org). May 15, 2009.*
- *Institute of Medicine. Dietary Reference Intakes: Water, Potassium, Sodium, Chloride, and Sulfate. February 11, 2004.*
- *Water, Other Fluids, and Fatal Coronary Heart Disease: The Adventist Study. American Journal of Epidemiology. 2002 May;155(9):827-833.*
- *Fluid intake and risk of bladder cancer. The New England Journal of Medicine. 1999 May 6;340:1390-1397.*

