
Fitness Tips

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How much water should I be drinking each day?

Question: *I've read so many different things about how much water we need to drink every day, and each thing says something different. How do I figure out how much I need to drink each day?*

Answer: Your water needs depend on many factors, including your health, how active you are and where you live. While no single formula fits everyone, a good estimate is to take your body weight in pounds and divide that number in half. That gives you the number of ounces of water per day that you need to drink. For example, if you weigh 160 pounds, you should drink at least 80 ounces of water per day. If you exercise, you should drink another eight ounce glass of water for every 20 minutes you are active. If you drink alcohol, you should drink at least an equal amount of water. When you are traveling on an airplane, it is good to drink eight ounces of water for every hour you are on board the plane.

Twenty percent of your water will come from the foods you eat. The rest of your water should come from the beverages you drink. Water is (by far) the best choice! Carbonated sodas have a lot of sugar in them, so if you drink pop, you'll take in more calories than you need. Herbal teas that aren't diuretic are great and "count" toward your water ounces. Sports drinks (like Gatorade) contain electrolytes and can be beneficial, just look out for added sugar and calories that you don't need. Juices are good because they have vitamins and nutrients, but again, monitor your calories if your goal is to lose weight.

When you read about people who die or get kidney damage "from drinking too much water", what's happening is that these people die or are seriously injured internally from over-hydration with insufficient replacement of sodium, which is called dilutional hyponatremia. The average American, who does not exercise that rigorously, needs water to lose weight. If the body does not receive adequate amounts, you will actually start to retain water, causing a net gain in weight and the liver to cease metabolizing fat at a normal rate. Basically, your metabolism will slow to a point where fat and water is now being stored by the body until it receives the proper amounts of water.

If you're concerned about your fluid intake, check with your doctor or a registered dietitian. They can help you determine the amount of water that's best for you.

Cari Draft Elliott is an ACE-Certified Personal Trainer who makes "house calls"! Please check out her website at www.oneononefitgirl.com and email your questions to cari@oneononefitgirl.com.
