



## The Importance of Hydrating the Body

The human body is comprised of more than 60% water. Your blood, brain, and muscles have even higher concentrations. With this much water in your body, it is no wonder why hydration is so important to your physical and mental health.

To understand how hydration affects your overall health and safety, you need to know how your body uses and loses water.

- You lose water when you go to the bathroom and even when you breathe and talk.
- The more active you are, the more your body uses water to sweat and cool you down.
- You use water at a faster rate in low humidity and high temperatures.

Maintaining proper hydration protects your health and safety by:

- Regulating your body temperature by sweating and helping to circulate blood.
- Lubricating your body's joints and moistening your internal tissues.
- Carrying nutrients and oxygen throughout the body.
- Aiding in food digestion and waste elimination.
- Flushing wastes from the body, including the stress hormone, cortisol, and the lactic acid byproducts of exercise.

It is important to know the signs and symptoms of dehydration. Even being slightly dehydrated can immediately impact your body and its performance—a 2% to 4% loss of fluids can quickly cause performance and health effects. Dehydration coupled with increased activity and high temperatures can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke, a life-threatening medical emergency. Monitor yourself and others closely for the following symptoms:

- Faintness and loss of vision.
- Headaches and cramping.
- Altered behavior (anxiety, confusion, or anger).
- Rapid breathing and weak, rapid pulse.
- Loss of consciousness.

To ensure you stay properly hydrated; drink fluids periodically throughout the day at meals, between meals and before, during, and after exercise or activity. High levels of exertion can mask your thirst, so do not wait until you feel thirsty to drink. Once you start to feel thirsty, you may already be dehydrated and in danger of getting sick.

How much water should you drink to stay properly hydrated? The Mayo Clinic cites medical research suggesting that men need 13 cups of total beverages a day while women need about 9 cups per day. This is very similar to the old rule of thumb to "drink eight 8-ounce glasses each day." Increase fluids when it is warmer and when you are more physically active.

Here are other ways to tell if you are properly hydrated and ideas to maintain good body hydration levels:

- One sign of proper hydration is if your urine is colorless or light colored.
- Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables can help provide your body with fluids.
- Balance your beverage types; try to avoid sugary, overly caffeinated, and high-calorie drinks.
- It is best to drink cool, fresh water throughout the workday.
- Rotate light fruit or vegetable juices, or electrolyte mixes into your beverages because electrolytes and small amounts of sodium are important in helping maintain proper nerve, muscle, and heart activity.

Maintaining proper body hydration is closely linked to your health and safety, so monitor yourself and others for the signs and symptoms of dehydration. Consume fluids, fruits, and vegetables throughout your day and during your activities to help maintain safe body fluid levels and keep your body healthy and operating at its optimum level.

---

Safety News is produced by State Compensation Insurance Fund to assist clients in their loss prevention efforts. Information or recommendations contained in this publication were obtained from sources believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is only advisory and does not presume to be exhaustive or inclusive of all workplace hazards or situations. Permission to reprint articles subject to approval by State Compensation Insurance Fund.

©2015 State Compensation Insurance Fund