

Protect Your Health: Hydration & Heat-Related Issue Prevention



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drinking enough water daily is important for your health. Water helps your body keep a normal temperature, lubricate and cushion joints, protect your spinal cord and other sensitive tissues, and get rid of wastes through urination, perspiration, and bowel movements.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) highlights that dehydration can lead to serious health issues such as urinary and kidney problems, heat injuries, and even seizures due to an imbalance of electrolytes.

Additionally, the National Weather Service emphasizes the importance of staying hydrated, especially in hot weather, to prevent heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

To maintain proper hydration, it is generally recommended to drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day, though individual needs can vary based on factors like activity level, climate, and overall health. Drinking water regularly throughout the day and consuming foods with high water content, such as fruits and vegetables, can help meet hydration needs.

When should you hydrate?

- **BEFORE work** - Being hydrated when you start work makes it easier to stay hydrated throughout the day. If you are dehydrated when you start work, you may not be able to drink enough to catch up with your body's need for water.
- **DURING work** - You should drink before you feel thirsty. By the time you feel thirsty, you are already behind in fluid replacement. Did you know that your work performance may suffer when you are dehydrated? You may not notice, but being dehydrated can impact performance!
 - When you work in the heat, it is recommended that you drink 8 ounces of water every 15–20 minutes. This translates to 24–32 ounces every hour. If you struggle drinking this much water, try drinking smaller intervals. This is more effective than drinking large amounts infrequently.
 - It is recommended that you do not drink more than 48 ounces per hour. Did you know that drinking too much water or other fluids (sports drinks, energy drinks, etc.) can cause a medical emergency? This can occur because the concentration of salt in the blood becomes too low.



AFTER work - Most people need several hours to drink enough fluids to replace what they have lost through sweat. The sooner you get started, the less strain you place on your body from dehydration. Hydrating after work is even more important if you work in the heat on a regular basis. Did you know that chronic dehydration increases the risk for a number of medical conditions? This is not a myth. You are putting yourself at risk for medical conditions, such as kidney stones.

General Helpful Tips:

- Stay informed! Listen or watch the local news for the weather forecast and adjust outdoor activities
- Visit air-conditioned places if your home is hot (e.g., senior center, library, faith-based organization, etc.)
- Do not use electric fans to cool yourself when the temperature reaches the high 90s and above — blowing air onto your body that is higher than your body temperature can actually increase heat stress
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing to stay cool if you are outdoors
- Avoid outdoor exercise between the hours of 10 AM and 5 PM. These are the hottest hours of the day!
- Take a cool shower or bath to stay cool
- Be knowledgeable about the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke
- Get health and safety information from your doctor

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Tips to Stay Hydrated:

- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water, throughout the day
- Do not wait until you are thirsty before you drink fluids
 - Except if advised to reduce fluid intake by your doctor!
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- Avoid drinks that are high in sugar and caffeine



What should you avoid?

- You should avoid **energy drinks**! Some energy drinks contain much more caffeine than standard servings of coffee, tea, or soft drinks. High caffeine levels can be risky when added to the strain placed on your body by heat.
- You should avoid **alcohol**! Did you know that alcohol can cause dehydration? Drinking alcohol within 24 hours of working in the heat can increase your risk of heat illness.

What about sports drinks?

- In general, eating regular meals with adequate water intake is sufficient to maintain water and electrolyte balance. For prolonged sweating lasting several hours, sports drinks with balanced electrolytes are another option to replace salt lost in sweat. Just be sure to look at the Nutrition Facts Labels to see what is in the item. It may add unnecessary calories to your diet due to the added sugar!

