

Hydration & Optimising Fluid Intake

Appropriate hydration of the body is an absolute requirement for health and is essential for life itself



The human body and water

Water is essential in every system and function of the body. Although the actual average percentages of water in the human body vary by gender, age, and weight, one thing is consistent: Starting at birth, more than half of your body weight is composed of water and will remain above 50 percent for most or all of your life, though it does decline over time. Water resides in your organs, tissue, and other body parts. In addition, plasma (the liquid portion of blood) is about 90 percent water. Plasma helps carry blood cells, nutrients, and hormones throughout the body. Water helps maintain body temperatures, and acts as a shock absorber to protect joints, sensitive tissue and is part of the fluid that surrounds and protects the brain and a baby in the womb. Dehydration is the loss of water from the body in excess of the amount consumed. Optimising fluid intake and maintaining fluid balance is a primary objective for supporting metabolic function.

Hydration and nutrition

Water facilitates digestive processes and is the key ingredient in saliva production and other digestive fluids. Nutrients in the foods we eat are either water-soluble or fat-solution meaning they require water or lipids to be absorbed by the body. Fluids act as the body's main transport system, transporting nutrients around the body to all the major organs, as well as flushing all waste materials and toxins from the body. Good fluid intake can also support hunger and satiety cues and aid weight management.

Hydration and well-being

Under typical circumstances the body loses and needs to replace approximately 2 to 3 litres of water daily. Fluid losses of more than 1% of body weight can lead to reduction in exercise performance and in the ability to control body temperature. Fluid deficits of 4% and more can lead to difficulties in concentration, headaches, irritability and sleepiness, and increases in body temperature and in respiratory rates. Dehydration that causes a loss of 10% or more of body weight can be fatal.

Optimising fluid intake to support well-being

1. Aim to drink a minimum of 8 glasses of water or < 2 L daily.
2. Drink little and often throughout the day to maintain hydration.
3. Include plant foods which naturally contain a high fluid content.
4. Consider meals with a liquid element, such as soups, to aid your fluid intake.
5. At the first sign of thirst, drink a glass of water as you may be dehydrated.

1. <https://www.europanhydrationinstitute.org/hydration>

