

**Fact sheet**

# Drink Water Instead



Around half to three-quarters of your body is made up of water. You can last weeks without food but only days without water. Water is found in all types of drinks and foods.

**Water** is the best drink to satisfy your thirst.

- It is kilojoule free
- It is cheap and readily available
- Drinking enough water each day can help to keep your body including your kidneys healthy

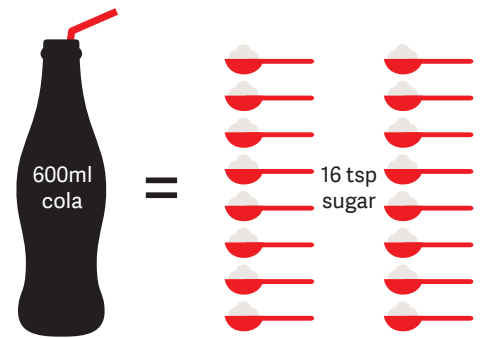
You also get a small part of your water each day from foods, especially some fruit and vegetables such as watermelon, cucumber and celery.

**Soft drinks** should be limited as they are high in sugar and can lead to kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and kidney stones. Diet soft drinks are lower in sugar, but can be acidic and damage your teeth.

**'Energy drinks'** are high in sugar and caffeine. Some bottled mineral waters contain salt which can lead to fluid retention and high blood pressure.

You can have these drinks occasionally, but they are not part of a healthy diet.

**Sugar-sweetened milk drinks, and fruit juice** should also be limited as they are high in sugar and add kilojoules.

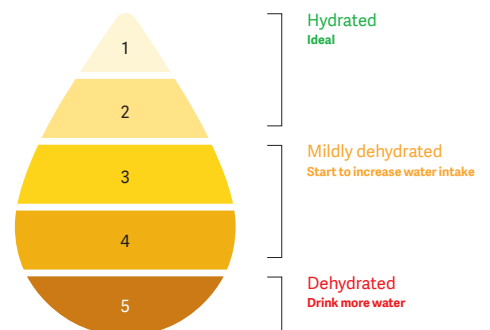


## Listen to your thirst

The amount of water you need to drink each day will change. You will need to drink more if it is a hot day, or if you are exercising.

Your body will tell you when you are thirsty. Dehydration means your body does not have enough water and being thirsty is often a sign of already being dehydrated.

How often you go to the toilet and the colour of your urine is also a good way to tell if your body is getting enough water. If it is pale yellow you are hydrated, and if it is dark yellow you are dehydrated and should drink more water.



## How will I know if I am dehydrated?

Dehydration is when the amount of water in your body is too low.

It's important that you listen to your body's signals telling you that you are thirsty.

Signs of dehydration include:

- dark-coloured urine
- headaches
- fatigue
- mood changes
- slow reaction times
- dry nasal passages
- dry or cracked lips
- weakness
- confusion
- hallucinations

## Treatment for dehydration

If you are showing early signs of dehydration:

- Stop what you are doing and if you are outside, find some shade
- Splash yourself with water
- Put a cool, wet cloth on your face and neck
- Drink water slowly, small sips at a time

**If you don't feel better within half an hour, or if you have other symptoms such as not being able to pass urine, vomiting, weakness or cramping, see a doctor or go to hospital immediately.**

## Dehydration in the elderly

Elderly people are often at risk of dehydration due to:

- declining kidney function
- hormonal changes
- not feeling thirsty
- medication (for example, diuretics and laxatives)
- chronic illness
- limited mobility

**If you are caring for an elderly person they may need reminding to drink regularly.**

Dehydration in the elderly may cause confusion, dry skin, migraines, low blood pressure, digestive problems, and constipation. Severe dehydration over time could even cause organ failure.



## Dehydration in children

Children can dehydrate quickly, especially if they are sick.

Vomiting, fever and diarrhoea can quickly dehydrate a baby or young child.

**This can be a life-threatening condition. If you suspect dehydration in a child, consult a doctor or go to hospital immediately.**

Some of the symptoms of dehydration in a child include:

- cold skin
- lethargy (tiredness)
- dry mouth
- sunken fontanelle on the skull
- a blue tinge of the skin as circulation of blood slows

## When you need to take extra notice of how much you drink

### If you have severe kidney disease

Your healthcare team will let you know if you need to limit your total fluid intake, and how much water you can drink each day.

### Exercise

The more you exercise, the more water you'll need to keep your body hydrated. During long sessions of intense exercise, such as a marathon, a sports drink that contains extra minerals and electrolytes might help replace what is lost in sweat.

### Environment

Hot or humid weather can make you sweat and you may need more water. Heated indoor air during winter can also cause your skin to lose moisture. Altitudes greater than 2,500 metres (8,200 feet) may cause increased urination and quicker breathing, so you lose some water. You can lose about 1.5 litres of water during a three-hour flight.

### Illness or health conditions

You should ensure that you keep your body hydrated if you have illness such as fever, vomiting and diarrhoea cause your body to lose water. Some conditions, such as bladder infections and urinary tract or kidney stones, also need increased water intake.

On the other hand, conditions such as heart failure and some types of kidney, liver and adrenal diseases may require that you limit your water intake. Your doctor will tell you how much you should drink.

### Pregnancy or breast-feeding

Women who are pregnant or breast-feeding need extra water to stay hydrated.

### You may also need more water in your diet if you:

- are on a high protein diet
- are on a high fibre diet, as fluids help prevent constipation

Here are some ideas to satisfy your thirst:

- Keep water handy and carry a bottle of water with you
- Ask for a bottle of water for your table when eating out
- If you are drinking alcohol, have a glass of water between each drink (alcohol causes you to lose water)
- Add a squeeze of lemon, lime or orange to water for variety
- If you drink a lot of tea or coffee try replacing some with a glass of water
- Water down fruit juices, sports drinks and cordials
- Use smaller glasses for sugary drinks so you drink less

## More information

Kidney Health Australia has Position Statements on drinking water and reducing consumption of sugar-sweetened soft drinks, which are available at [www.kidney.org.au](http://www.kidney.org.au).

<http://kidney.org.au/health-professionals/support/resources-publications/publications/position-statements>



### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Water is the best drink to satisfy your thirst.
- It is important to drink enough water to make sure your body functions at its best.
- Dehydration can be life threatening in young children and the elderly, or if you are sick.

## What does that word mean?

**Blood pressure** - The pressure of the blood in the arteries as it is pumped around your body by your heart.

**Dehydration** - Happens when you don't have enough fluids in your body. If severe, dehydration can cause serious problems and you may need to go to hospital.

**Diabetes** - A chronic disease caused by problems with the production and/or action of insulin in the body which helps control blood sugar levels.

**Diuretic** - Any substance that increases the production of urine.

**Fluid retention** - When the body does not remove enough liquid (water). This can cause swollen or puffy ankles, face or hands.

**Hydrated** - When you have enough fluids for your body to function well.

**Kidney stones** - Kidney stones happen when salts in the urine form a solid crystal. These stones can block the flow of urine and cause infection, kidney damage or even kidney failure.

**Kilojoules** - A measure of the energy value of food.

**Laxatives** - Medications to relieve constipation (passing of hard, dry bowel motions (stools) that may be infrequent or difficult to pass).

**Urinary tract infection (UTI)** - Causes symptoms like needing to urinate frequently or pain when urinating. It is caused by bacteria and may need to be treated with antibiotics.

For more information about kidney or urinary health, please contact our free call Kidney Health Information Service (KHIS) on 1800 454 363.

Or visit our website [kidney.org.au](http://kidney.org.au) to access free health literature.

This is intended as a general introduction to this topic and is not meant to substitute for your doctor's or Health Professional's advice. All care is taken to ensure that the information is relevant to the reader and applicable to each state in Australia. It should be noted that Kidney Health Australia recognises that each person's experience is individual and that variations do occur in treatment and management due to personal circumstances, the health professional and the state one lives in. Should you require further information always consult your doctor or health professional.



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For all types of services ask for 1800 454 363