

Keeping Hydrated

Our bodies are made up of almost two-thirds water which is why it is so important that we drink enough fluid to stay healthy and hydrated. The way we stay hydrated is not only from consuming water, but also from other drinks such as tea, coffee, fruit juices and milk. We also take in water through our food; approximately 20% of our fluid intake come from the food that we eat. It is recommended that we stay away from sugary drinks and alcohol as these have a negative effect on our sugar levels and hydration.



How Much to Drink?



How much we need to drink can depend on a number of factors including: a person's height, weight, age, how much exercise they do, and the weather. For example, on a hot summer's day a person would likely drink more water than in winter. On average though, the European Food Safety Authority recommends 2.0 litres of water a day for men and 1.6 litres of water a day for women. This works out as roughly 10 glasses for men, and 8 glasses for women.

Signs of Dehydration

We are constantly losing fluid every day when we breathe, sweat and go to the toilet. So when we don't drink enough fluid to maintain our bodies' water levels, we become 'Dehydrated'.

The first and most obvious signs of dehydration are dry-sticky mouth, and the feeling of thirst.

Other symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Dark urine, in small amounts
- Frequent urinary infections
- Tiredness
- Feeling light-headed
- Anger, impatience
- Short attention span



If dehydration goes untreated, it can cause

- [kidney stones](#) and affect overall kidney function.
- Cholesterol problems
- Joint, liver and muscle damage
- Constipation

When to consult your Doctor

If your symptoms continue or worsen despite drinking fluids, or your baby/toddler is showing signs of dehydration, you should contact your GP straight away.

Severe dehydration requires immediate medical attention and you should contact your GP or out of hours service if you experience any of the following:

- Confusion
- Rapid heart beat
- Blood in stool or vomit
- Not passing urine for 8 hours
- Low blood pressure



Hydration and Toileting

Whilst keeping our bodies hydrated is important in maintaining our health, drinking a lot of water in a short space of time can cause problems of its own. When an excess amount of fluid collects in the body, it can lead to what is known as water intoxication or reduced levels of sodium in the blood. However this is very rare and would require an extensive amount of water before reaching this point.

More commonly, the difficulty with drinking too much water can be the number of times you need to visit the toilet.

On average your bladder passes urine 6 times a day.

If you are passing water more frequently than this and your urine is very pale, you may be drinking more than you need. It is advised that a person should drink no more than a litre per hour, at the most.



Bladder control

For those who have mobility issues, visiting the toilet more frequently than required can cause unnecessary effort and risk of falls. In these instances, having good bladder control is important for reducing the risk of falls. Good bladder control can be achieved by establishing a routine of visiting the toilet in order to train the bladder. It involves passing urine on a timed schedule and gradually increasing the time between trips to the bathroom to approximately 3-4 hours between passing urine. If you have underlying medical conditions however, it is advised that you consult your doctor before altering your toileting habits.

Overnight toileting

When planning fluid intake to alter our toileting routine, it is important to consider overnight toileting. During the night is typically when we are at our most drowsy and therefore most unsteady on our feet, particularly if you have a pre-existing mobility issue. It is therefore recommended that where possible, a person would avoid getting up through the night or at least minimise the times they need to get up to reduce the risk of falls.

Furthermore, waking at night to use the toilet can result in poor sleep pattern – this is known as Nocturia. As a result this can increase a person's risk of falls during the day.

To help minimise the need to get up through the night, it is recommended that we avoid a group of drinks known as diuretics. Diuretics promote the production of urine so therefore increase the amount of times we need to go to the toilet. Examples of these include:

- Coffee/Tea
- Cola
- Alcohol
- Grapefruit juice



Another means of reducing overnight toilet trips is by limiting the amount of fluid we consume before bed.

Unless there is a medical need for continuous fluids, having your last drink two hours before bedtime will prevent or lessen the need to pass urine through the night.

However, be sure to **drink plenty of fluids** during the day to **prevent dehydration**.