
DOOR STEP NUTRITION



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How to Stay Hydrated for Better Health

Water is essential to almost all bodily functions, from lubricating our joints to pumping blood to our heart. Older adults are more prone to becoming dehydrated for a number of reasons, including a diminished sense of thirst. Finding simple ways to increase your water intake can help you avoid the complications of dehydration and stay healthy.

What is the meaning of “hydrated”? Being hydrated simply means that your body has enough fluids to function properly. According to the American Heart Association, the amount of water each person needs can vary. A quick way to tell if you’re drinking enough is to check the color of your urine. If it’s pale in color and clear, you are likely well-hydrated. If it’s dark-colored with amber or brown tones, you may be dehydrated.

Dehydration is a potentially serious condition that can occur when you don’t consume enough fluids for your body’s needs. This can lead to health complications ranging from mild to life-threatening, such as urinary tract infections (UTIs), heat stroke, heart problems, kidney failure, and blood clot complications. Since dehydration affects the health of your cells, it can also lower your body’s ability to ward off infections and heal from injury or illness.

Seniors are more vulnerable to dehydration for a number of reasons.

- Appetite and thirst tend to diminish with age. This means that even when your body is craving fluids, you might not be aware of it and you may drink less than you need to stay healthy.
- Older adults experience body composition changes over time that leave them with less water in their bodies to start with.
- Seniors are more likely to take medications that increase dehydration risk.

Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Dark-colored urine, urinating less frequently
- Fatigue, or feeling weak

- Irritability
 - Dizziness
 - Headaches
 - Muscle cramps in arms or legs
 - Dry mouth
 - Confusion, decreased cognitive function
- The tiredness and lack of coordination that may result from dehydration can also lead to falls and injury.

How to stay hydrated:

- Choose foods with high water content: If you have trouble drinking fluids, try including water-rich foods with every meal. These include cucumbers, watermelon, lettuce, strawberries, tomatoes, celery, citrus, low sodium soups, broths, stews. In general, most fruits and vegetables have a high-water content.
- Keep water with you, always! Carry a refillable water bottle with you wherever you go.
- Avoid or reduce your alcohol intake. Alcohol is a diuretic, which means it prompts your body to remove fluids from your body.
- Change it up. Pure clean water is the best way to stay hydrated. But it can get tiresome. Try jazzing up your water by adding slices of fresh lemon, apple, cucumber, or berries. You may also choose to switch up water with other options such as low-sugar sports drinks or protein and nutritional shakes specifically designed for seniors. Caffeinated coffee and tea can have a slight dehydrating effect, so they should not be counted toward your daily fluid intake.
- Build hydration into your routine. Making it a point to drink water at certain times each day can help transform it into a healthy habit. For example, consume a glass of water when you wake up in the morning, after every meal, and before and after exercise or activity.

