

Hydration in the Human Body

Let's talk about the opposite first. Dehydration is a serious and potentially life-threatening condition in which the body contains an insufficient amount of water necessary for normal / optimal functioning.

Thirst isn't the only sign that you should drink more water. In fact, by the time you're thirsty, you may have already entered into the dangerous territory of dehydration.

A human can die in 5-7 days without H₂O, thus dehydration can be very serious. To operate optimally, most experts say the body needs seven to eight 12 ounce glasses of water each day, just to replace the fluid loss that occurs during a normal day. Even more water is needed during hot weather (Florida), periods of illness and when exercising. Many people simply do not take in this amount of water, instead getting their intake of liquids through coffee, tea, sodas, beer or wine. Caffeine makes the matter worse by stimulating the kidneys to extract liquids.

It's very common to confuse hunger with dehydration. If your stomach is growling, your best bet is to drink some water. Try drinking a glass of water and wait 20 minutes before grabbing that snack you've been pondering,

Feeling cranky? Skipping H₂O may be the worst thing you could do. Two studies from the University of Connecticut put men and women through a series of cognitive tests and found that even being mildly dehydrated affected their moods and caused fatigue and headaches.

Water helps to plump up your skin, so you should be able to imagine that dehydration will exacerbate dry skin conditions. When you don't drink enough water, the collagen begins to crack and bind together, causing more fine lines and wrinkles. We rely on water to keep our insides properly hydrated, too. Your mouth, skin, and everything else won't feel as dry when you hydrate.

In order for your kidneys to work properly, you need water to dilute the blood. Without enough water, your kidneys have to work overtime to filter the blood. Therefore severe and chronic dehydration can lead to kidney failure or worse, kidney stones!

When our bodies become dehydrated our blood can become thicker and restrict blood flow. This can lead to an increase in blood pressure and a rise in blood cholesterol. This is the body's way of preventing any further water loss from the cells. According to the American Heart Association, high blood pressure and blood cholesterol increase your risk of coronary heart disease. Drinking more H₂O can help lower both, so drink up!

Ever want to know how well-hydrated are you? When you don't drink enough water, your urine color will turn into a darker yellow. If more you're dehydrated, the less often you pee.

**** If your pee is not clear you *could* have a bladder infection. The cloudiness comes from mucus, tissues and proteins that are breaking down and coalescing. We advise that you get your urine tested with a 10 parameter urine testing strip.**

So what are some of the perks of staying well hydrated?

1. Water helps prevent a dry mouth.

Water keeps your throat and lips moist. Dry mouth can cause bad breath and/or an unpleasant taste and can promote cavities.

2. Water benefits cardiovascular health.

Dehydration lowers your blood volume, so your heart must work harder to pump the reduced amount of blood and get enough oxygen to your cells, which makes everyday activities like walking upstairs as well as exercise in general more difficult.

3. Water regulates your body temperature.

Your body releases heat by expanding blood vessels close to the skin's surface (this is why your face gets red during exercise), resulting in more blood flow and more heat dissipated into the air. When you're dehydrated, it takes a higher outside temperature to trigger blood vessels to widen, so you stay consistently hotter.

4. Water helps muscles and joints work better.

When you're well hydrated, the water inside and outside the cells of contracting muscles provides adequate nutrients and removes waste efficiently so you perform better. Water is also important for lubricating joints.

****Contrary to popular belief, muscle cramps do not appear to be related to dehydration, but, instead, to muscle fatigue, according to Sam Cheuvront, Ph.D., an exercise physiologist.**

5. Water helps to keep skin supple.

When a person is severely dehydrated, skin is less elastic. This is different than dry skin, which is usually the result of soap, hot water and exposure to dry air.

6. Water helps cleanse your body both inside and out. Your kidneys need water to filter waste from the blood and excrete it in urine. Keeping hydrated may also help prevent urinary tract infections and kidney stones. If you are severely dehydrated, your kidneys may stop working, causing toxins to build up in your body.