



hydration help

The hot summer months are here, and many people will be spending plenty of time outdoors. One of the most important factors for good health (especially in the heat) is hydration, particularly water. Water helps flush toxins out of your system, maximizes your metabolic rate, allows for the efficient flow of nutrients into cells, and helps organs function properly. With so many options available from flavored waters, vitamin water, sparkling water, sports drinks, etc....it's difficult to determine which is best, and how much should you be drinking.

If you are dehydrated, your metabolic rate can slow down up to 10%. So how much fluid do you need? The rule of thumb is half of your body weight in ounces is how much fluid you need daily. For example, a 150 pound person needs to consume at least 75 ounces of fluid per day. Plus, you need

additional fluid for sweat lost during exercise or heat. More specifically, if you weigh yourself before a workout, replace every pound lost in sweat with 16 ounces of additional fluid. Any type of fluid counts toward this goal, except for caffeinated and alcoholic beverages (wine doesn't count!). Caffeine and alcohol draw fluids out of tissues, causing a dehydrating effect. That's not to say you can't have that morning cup of coffee or an after work cocktail, just be sure you are consuming adequate amounts of appropriate fluids during the day.

So what if you don't care for plain water? Vitamin and fitness waters are popular beverages recently. These sound healthy; however, Vitamin Water actually contains very minimal amounts of vitamins, and a lot of added sugar. As with any food or beverage, learning to read labels is key. Fortunately, now there are some better options available. Vitamin Water Zero and Propel flavored waters are enhanced with some electrolytes and vitamins. These are both great-tasting alternatives to plain water; Vitamin Water Zero has no calories and Propel has about 20 calories per serving (this should be your caloric limit to avoid unwanted sugar content).

Sports drink manufacturers have also produced low or zero calorie versions of Gatorade, Powerade, etc. These drinks are great substitutes, and have a lot less sugar than their counterparts. The only time your body actually requires one of the regular sports drinks is if you have been out in the heat, and/or sweating a lot for over two hours or so. At this point, your body needs replenishment with sodium, sugar, electrolytes, etc., so the extra calories are utilized.

Sparkling water is as beneficial as flat water and can be a super alternative to sodas. Several of the seltzer/sparkling waters are available with no added sugar or artificial sweeteners, naturally fruit sweetened. Many worry that carbonated beverages are acidic; however, the acidity level in these drinks is low and not harmful. Regular and diet sodas have a lot of added acids (phosphoric and citric acid) which can be harmful to your teeth and bones. One warning - if you are prone to heartburn, tend to feel bloated, or have issues with gas, bubbly beverages can exacerbate these problems.

Fruit juice that's made from 100% juice, preferably with no added sugars, also counts towards your daily fluid needs. However, if you are trying to lose weight, don't waste calories on fruit juice, stick to zero or low calorie beverages. The truth is, fruit juice contains as many calories and sugar as a soft drink. The 100% fruit juice is better for you than the soft drink because it contains more vitamins and minerals, but, from a caloric standpoint, they are about the same. Crystal Light or similar products can be a great alternative to juice if you are calorie conscious. Plus, there are many "diet" juices available that are zero or close to zero calories, and "light" versions which are a little higher in calories, still a better choice if you're watching your waistline. On the contrary, if you're looking to put on weight, sipping on fruit juice during the day is a great way to add extra calories, while supplying additional vitamins and minerals. If you're craving fruit in the hot sun, enjoy a piece of fresh fruit. It's more satisfying and contains more fiber to help keep you full.

Smoothies can be refreshing this time of year. To cut back on sugar and calories, ask for no added sugar (turbinado, honey, etc.), request fresh fruit (not in syrup) and include a scoop of protein powder to make it a complete meal or snack.

Bottom line for staying hydrated in the summer months: If you are watching your waistline, consume mostly zero calorie beverages, aiming for half of your body weight in ounces. If you're struggling to get in your daily fluid requirement, plenty of foods that you consume contain water, especially fruits and vegetables (75% water content for many). Try to keep a beverage with you and sip on it all day long. If you don't care for plain water, there are other options that are just as beneficial.

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