

Top Ten Ways to Increase Your Fluid Intake

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At some point, we have all heard, “Drink lots of water!” That’s good advice. As the weather heats up, we forget sometimes to stay properly hydrated. Dehydration can cause headaches, lethargy, muscle weakness, and a host of other problems. But there are differences among the various beverages we can drink. So, what is adequate hydration? Which beverages are best, and how do they fit into our overall eating plan? Here are some answers.



1. Drink 8–16 oz. of water-based beverage (water, juice, or milk) with every meal and snack (8–10 cups per day is the minimum; goal is 10–12 cups if you are more active).

Some beverages are better than others for hydration. Here is a quick overview:

- **Best:** water, fitness waters, flavored water, mineral water, sport beverages, club soda
- **Very good:** 100-percent fruit juices, lemonade, tomato and vegetable juices, low fat/skim milk, natural smoothies
- **Good:** all fruits and vegetables
- **So-so:** soft drinks (diet soft drinks in moderation), decaffeinated coffee, yogurt
- **Not so helpful:** caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea, soda) and alcoholic beverages

2. If you drink coffee or caffeinated beverages, alternate decaffeinated beverage intake throughout the day.

Caffeinated beverages and alcohol are diuretics, meaning that they drive water from the body rather than hydrating. These beverages do not count toward daily fluid intake. So, be sure to drink true hydrating fluids.

3. Limit caffeinated beverage intake after a certain time in the day (for example, 1:00 or 2:00 p.m.).

4. Set a reasonable limit on coffee intake (1–2 cups per day).

5. Substitute decaffeinated versions of tea, soda, or coffee for some of your caffeinated drinks.

Ideally, for every caffeinated beverage, you need a serving of a water-based fluid. So, if you like the taste of coffee, tea, or carbonated soft drinks, try the decaffeinated versions of these.

6. Another way in which you can increase your fluids is to increase your vegetable juice and milk consumption.

Two cups of vegetable juice equals the minimum four vegetable servings per day; two cups of milk equals the minimum dairy intake per day. In addition to increasing fluid intake, choosing vegetable juice will help meet your daily requirement for antioxidant nutrients like beta-carotene and vitamin C. And milk helps meet your calcium needs.

7. Try calorie-free fruit-flavored waters as a beverage of choice.

Perrier, Schweppes, Canada Dry, Fruit₂O, Dasani, Aquafina, Hint, Propel, and others make flavored no-calorie waters. Some are simply flavored, some are sweetened with Splenda, and others contain enhancements like vitamins. Read the labels and choose what works best for you.

8. Dilute juices.

For some people, fruit and vegetable juices taste too thick or sweet. Try diluting them with water or, for a fizzy kick, use club soda.

9. Alternate club soda with alcoholic beverages.

When enjoying adult beverages, remember to alternate alcoholic content (which, if you recall, is diuretic) with a water equivalent, like club soda or flavored water.



10. Keep a water bottle with you at all times, especially in hotter weather.

Freeze bottled water overnight. That way, you can sip it as it thaws and it will stay cold longer during the day as you work, play, or run errands.

Staying hydrated in the summer heat will help you stay energized and fit. Follow the easy steps in this article for adequate fluid intake. And remember...don't wait until you feel thirsty to have a drink. When you're thirsty, you are already dehydrated!