

This Is How Much Water You Should Actually Drink

You know staying hydrated is important. But why? How much do you need? And when can you have a something that tastes a better instead? Our experts have you covered.

Somehow, downing microbrews on a hot afternoon is always an effortless task, but getting enough water is a different story. You can make all the excuses you want—popular entrants include *I forgot*, *I just don't like the taste*, and *I lost my Nalgene ages ago*—but since water does things like flush your body of toxins, keep joints flexible, and transport nutrients around the body, replenishing your stores of it should be just as important as happy hour.

Because “try to drink more water” qualifies as useful-but-not-helpful advice, though, we recruited a few well-hydrated experts to answer all your most pressing questions about your intake of the most common substance on the planet: what, when, why, and how much. Bottoms up.

Eight glasses a day, right? I remember that!

Not so fast. Yes, the American College of Sports Medicine suggests a minimum of about 60 ounces daily, but the optimal amount for each person varies based on things like gender, age, activity level, and even geographic location. (People living at higher elevations are more prone to dehydration.)

Looking for a more tailored suggestion? Shoot for between 25 and 50 percent of your body weight in ounces of water, suggests Josh Axe, D.N.M., a clinical nutritionist and the founder of [Ancient Nutrition](#). One caveat, though: “That assumes you’re also eating a good amount of hydrating produce items, which help to combat electrolyte imbalance and support better hydration.” If your diet doesn’t incorporate fruits and vegetables that are high in water—strawberries, iceberg lettuce, celery, pineapple, and cantaloupe—you need to drink even more. (You should also start incorporating those foods into your diet.)

Okay, so what about exercise?

If you’re a soak-through-your-shirt-on-the-treadmill sort of guy, the ACSM [recommends](#) that you drink about 500 ml of fluid—roughly 17 ounces—two hours before exercise, which both promotes adequate hydration and also allows time for a bathroom break. But don’t start chugging the moment you throw on a pair of compression shorts. One 2015 [study](#) found that some athletes are so concerned about dehydration that they consume *toomuch* water during exercise, which can entail its own set of deleterious health consequences.

What’s the sweet spot for you? Aim for one or two cups of water per pound of sweat-induced weight loss. “Essentially, weigh yourself before and after exercise to determine how much water weight you shed,” suggests Abbie E. Smith-Ryan, Ph.D., an advisor at [Revere](#). Make sure you try this process in different environments, too—you might sweat more out on the track, for example, than you do in a climate-controlled gym.

If you’re waiting to drink until you’re thirsty, you’re making

a mistake. “Even a one-percent weight loss from dehydration can lead to increased muscle fatigue, decreased speed, and decreased strength,” says Heather Milton, M.S., a senior exercise physiologist at the [NYU Langone Sports Performance Center](#). “Two percent can lead to decreases in reaction time, cognition, and power.”

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When do I get to have sports drinks?

If you’re exercising for longer periods of time, consider trying something besides plain old water. Leah Silberman, M.S., R.D., and a nutritionist for [CORE](#), suggests that people experiment with powders, sports drinks, and electrolyte-infused water, all of which help to facilitate proper muscle function, blood pressure, and cell structure integrity. “If it’s hot out, this is extra important,” Silberman says. “Just be sure to steer clear of high-sugar options, which will ultimately dehydrate you.”

Is there a time of day that's more important to drink up than others?

If getting enough water is already a challenge, don't worry too much about *when* you're consuming it. But if you're ready to take things to the next level, Axe suggests being mindful of water consumption within 30 minutes of waking, sleeping, and eating. "Drinking water during your meal can somewhat dilute stomach acid and cause your body to work harder to digest what you eat," he says. Keep that water on ice until after you're done eating.

This sounds hard.

First, grow up. Second, get creative! If taste is your problem, try using an infuser to liven up the proceedings. (Lemon, grapefruit, cucumber, and mint are all delightful candidates.) Seltzer counts, too, says Smith-Ryan, and you can even include coffee and milk in your fluid intake. Try and make water your go-to option, though; it plays a vital role in the metabolic process, and unlike its competitors, it has no other impact on your diet.

If your phone can find you love and summon your dinner, it can help you stay hydrated, too. Apps like [Waterlogged](#) function as a water diary and provide gentle "drink-now" reminders when you need them. And if *that* isn't enough, try putting some money on the line with a habit-building app like [Spar](#), which brings your friends (and your wallet) into the picture. Missing your daily check-in results in payment of an agreed-upon penalty. When forgetting to drink water starts to affect your attendance at Thursday happy hour, we're guessing you'll find a way to remember in a hurry.

(Source: GQ)