

What You're Thirsting For: The Health Benefits of Drinking Water

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Here is a secret to revitalization, particularly effective for the afternoon blahs: Treat yourself to a tall glass of water.

Water has wonderful restorative properties. It is a natural, fat free appetite suppressant that contains no calories and no cholesterol. It is low in sodium, helps the body metabolize fat, helps maintain skin and muscle tone, and improves energy levels.

Every physiological function depends on water. Water helps regulate body temperature, transports oxygen, nutrients, hormones, and antibodies; helps eliminate toxins and other wastes from the body; and lubricates your joints as well as your hair, skin, mouth, nose, and eyes.

Water protects organs and tissues; increases the efficiency of proteins and enzymes essential to metabolism; and relieves water retention (though it may seem counterintuitive, when you are retaining water, the best course of action is to drink more water, not less).

If you allow yourself to get dehydrated, every part of your body suffers. Dehydration has been linked to asthma and allergies, constipation and heartburn, hypertension and headaches, poor muscle tone, and inefficiencies in digestion, metabolism, and organ function.

Warning signs of dehydration include mental confusion, pain in the joints, stomach, and back, and low energy.

Keep your energy levels up, particularly after a workout, by making sure you get enough.

How much is enough?

Here is a good rule of thumb: drink one half of an ounce of water for each pound of body weight. So if you weigh 140 pounds, you need 70 ounces per day.

Keep in mind that your body needs 16 ounces of water before, 4 to 8 ounces every 20 minutes during, and 24 ounces following your workout.

As with most major lifestyle changes, check with your doctor before significantly changing your water intake. Certain medical conditions call for restricted or increased water consumption.

When you first begin to re hydrate, you may feel like you are spending all of your time in the bathroom. But within a few

weeks, your body will adjust and you will urinate less frequently. Just avoid heavy water intake right before bed to avoid midnight trips to the bathroom, which can interfere with sleep patterns.

Here are some common excuses for not getting enough water:

1. "I am not thirsty." You may notice that, when you drink more water, you find yourself thirsty, but when you live on caffeinated soda, you are not thirsty at all.

The truth is, thirst is not a good indicator of water deprivation. A lack of thirst may actually signal dehydration, and "dry mouth" thirst is a sign of extreme dehydration. When your body is deprived of water, it adjusts by disabling the body's thirst sensor. Once you start hydrating yourself, thirst kicks in again.

2, "I do not like water." Here are some tips for downing the day's water:

Make it readily available. Keep a water bottle in your car and at your desk. Stash another bottle in your bag and carry it with you.

Liven up ordinary water with a squirt of lime or lemon juice. Sometimes, I add a splash of fruit juice to the water. Try to go easy on the juice, though. Most juices are high in sugar, which adds calories and stimulates the pancreas.

Purchase an inexpensive water filter, such as the Brita water filter. For about \$30, you can enjoy great tasting water all the time. Plus, when you have cold, refreshing water ready in the fridge, you will be more likely to pour yourself a glass.

Find an elegant container. Every drink looks more refreshing in an elegant crystal goblet.

Know thyself. How is water made most appealing to you? Do you prefer an ice cold glass with fresh lemon slices? Then make sure it is easy to prepare.

Experiment. Put a glass mug in the freezer before bed or freeze a half filled water bottle, and fill it with water before you go out for the day. Then enjoy the cold water as the ice thaws.

When you are properly hydrated, you will experience an energy boost and you may find that you eat less, too.

Susie Cortright is the founder of several popular websites, including Susies-Coupons.com, BestSelfHelp.com and Momscape.com, where you can register to win gift cards from top online merchants.

Tips For Your Body's Health

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