

WATER—THE ORPHAN NUTRIENT

To get the most from your weight management program, your body must function as efficiently as possible. This requires fueling your body with adequate amounts of protein, carbohydrate, fat, vitamins, minerals and water.

Why is Water Important?

Although you might overlook water as an essential nutrient in your weight management program, it serves many important purposes. Water helps carry other nutrients throughout the body and helps transport waste products out of the body. It functions as a “joint lubricant” and a “cell shock absorber.” It enables numerous chemical reactions to take place and helps regulate your body temperature. And when it comes to weight loss, water plays a notably important role. As fat breaks down, the body requires increased fluids to help eliminate the resulting wastes. Water also aids in controlling bowel regularity. Plus, drinking more fluids can help you feel full.

What are the Best Water Sources?

The most obvious dietary source of water is plain water. However, the water in other beverages also counts towards your daily intake. In fact, you can meet up to half (32 ounces) of your daily water requirements with other drinks (except alcohol) as well as high water content fruits and vegetables (i.e. melons). Because of the calories present in milk and juices, your best choices of beverages when following a calorie-restricted diet are sparkling water, non-alcoholic, sugar-free flavored drinks, diet sodas, coffees or teas. Note: Because caffeine has a diuretic effect, it's important to limit your intake of caffeinated beverages.

How Much Water Should I Drink?

Your water needs will vary based on your program requirements. If you are on a very low calorie diet, divide your body weight by 2.2 to determine how many ounces of water you should consume daily. If you are on a moderate calorie-restricted diet, the standard “eight glasses a day” (at 8 ounces each) is a good rule to follow. Whether you are on a weight loss or weight management program, if you are working hard, exercising strenuously, or if the climate is either extremely hot or extremely cold, you may need up to 12 eight-ounce glasses of water daily.

Tips For Increasing Your Water Intake

- Drink one 8-ounce beverage prior to meals and one with each meal. Not only will this help you meet your water needs, it will also help curb your appetite.
- Designate a 32-ounce pitcher or bottle for your water or low-calorie beverage. Fill it first thing in the morning and drink from it throughout the day until it's empty. If your goal is to drink 64 ounces (or eight 8-ounce glasses) of fluid each day, you'll know that you've met half of your daily water needs when you finish the pitcher or bottle.
- Carry a water-filled bottle with you when you're “on the go.”
- Use your daily food diary to keep track of how much water you drink.
- Remember, not all cups hold eight ounces of fluid. Before using your favorite glass, mug, or water bottle, measure how much fluid it holds.