

Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

As mercury rises, beat the heat with water

Do we really need to drink more water when the weather is hot?

If you're outdoors when it's hot and sticky, and you become hot and sticky yourself, then, yes, that's a good signal that you should drink more water.

You might not think much about it, but water is the most abundant substance in your body. Each and every organ in your body needs water to do its job. Water serves as a medium where chemical reactions take place — and the body is a veritable 24-hours-a-day laboratory bustling with such reactions. Water also helps control body heat through perspiration and helps lubricate your knees, elbows and other joints. And it does other jobs, as well — too many to list here.

As your body uses all that water, and loses it from perspiration, urination and other functions, the water needs to be replaced.

While you might need to consume a few ounces of protein, carbohydrate and even some healthful fats in your daily diet, you need a lot more water: It's recommended that men get 3.7 liters of water a day, and women, 2.7 liters. And in certain situations, such as very hot weather, your body needs more than normal.

But before you start lugging around 2-liter bottles filled with H₂O, it's important to know that you do get quite a bit of water from other beverages and even from foods. With foods, fruits and vegetables generally contain the most water — watermelon is about 91 percent water by weight; raw broccoli, 89 percent. But even other foods such as beans, chicken, pasta and bread contain ample amounts of water that your body can put to use.

That said, don't discount the need for a glass — or actually about eight — of good old-fashioned water each day. That's about the amount of fluids you should drink to accompany the water you're getting



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from food. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' Complete Food and Nutrition Guide, the body's need for water varies from day to day, with more needed when you experience:

- Higher levels of physical activity. During exercise, the academy advises "drink early and often."
- Exposure to extreme temperatures, either hot or cold. You need water to maintain a normal body temperature.
- Exposure to dry air, such as heated or recirculated air.
- High altitudes. At about 8,200 feet, your heart rate as well as urine output could increase, both of which require you to drink more water.
- Pregnancy, which increases the recommendation for fluid intake for women to 3.8 liters a day.
- Illness that includes fever, diarrhea or vomiting. Plenty of fluids are needed to prevent dehydration.
- Eating a high-fiber diet. The body needs more water to process the fiber through the intestines.

Nutritionists generally recommend water as the top choice as a beverage. Not only is it calorie-free, it's cheap from the tap and provides everything your body needs to replenish fluids. So, tip back your glass and enjoy, knowing you're doing your body good.

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Editor: This column was reviewed by Carolyn Gunther, Ohio State University Extension specialist in Community Nutrition Education.

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