

Did you know that your body is two-thirds water? To put it another way, if you weigh 60 kilos, around 40 kilos of you is...water! That's 40 litres, or roughly 80 pints of water. Even our bones are 20% water...and the human brain is more than three quarters water.

We are basically pretty wet, and our bodies need water to work properly. We can survive without food for ages...but without water we'd only last a few days.

We lose water all the time, even in winter. Water is lost in your breath and when you go to the toilet. You lose water even faster when you're sweating.

Of course, we replace our fluids all the time. Many foods are great for replacing lost water, including soup and fruit. We also replace our body water when we drink. It's surprisingly easy to be a little bit dehydrated (that's what we call it when your body is short of water). Being slightly

dehydrated may affect your short-term memory and your ability to do simple maths. Mild dehydration can even cause constipation!

Keeping yourself properly topped up with water has many health benefits, and we'll talk about these later.



In a recent school survey in County Clare, only 5 % of students drank water at any time during the day!

What Should We Drink?

What you drink is important. Studies in America have found that when children switch from fizzy drinks (like cola) to water, it helps them to manage their weight better. Fizzy drinks have high levels of sugar, and that is a problem. They are full of calories.

Apart from rotting your teeth, the sugar is bad news for your system. It plays havoc with appetite, and provides unnecessary calories. If you have a serious fizzy drink habit over a long period of time, it may increase your chances of getting type II diabetes. Soft drinks (even diet drinks) have also been linked to osteoporosis - brittle bones.

The odd can of soft drink won't kill you...BUT don't make a habit of it!

Water is the best (and cheapest!) fluid that we can drink.

Some other fluids that provide water include:

Fruit Juices and Smoothies These can be a bit sugary, but they are generally pretty healthy. They usually contain antioxidants-which are seriously good for your health-along with some vitamins. More on these in future factsheets. Avoid false fruit juices-just because it's a nice "Sunny" colour doesn't mean it's from a fruit-so choose something that says "fruit juice" on the label. If you want to be

really healthy, dilute with a splash of water.

Tea and coffee are interesting, because they contain caffeine, which causes dehydration (we call caffeine a diuretic). Colas also contain caffeine. The levels of caffeine in a single cup of tea or coffee are pretty low, and the odd cup of tea or weak coffee is OK ...but don't drink too much! Several cups of tea/coffee will dehydrate you. Tea and coffee also contain beneficial antioxidants.

Milk couldn't be more natural and is a good source of calcium.

Fruit has a high water content, and is a perfect snack. Some fruits are

80% water. Oranges, grapes, apples and tangerines are all good choices. Fruit is incredibly healthy for many other reasons-the ideal snack!

Soup is a great way to keep hydrated in cool weather. Scientists have recently found that chicken soup is great for your symptoms when you have a cold!



"Three quarters of the human brain is made of water!"

Benefits of Drinking Water

- Helps you to stay cool
- Great for skin
- Good for energy levels
- Improves memory
- Helps you to think
- Good for circulation
- Good for muscle tone
- Helps your digestion
- Gets rid of toxins
- Helps prevent constipation
- Helps prevent urinary infections
- Great for sports performance
- Helps prevent colds
- Lubricates your joints

"Look at the colour of your pee...it shouldn't be too dark or too smelly."



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Am I Dehydrated?

One trick we have used with Olympic athletes is to have them monitor their own pee...which is surprisingly easy to do. Just take a look next time you go to the toilet!

If your pee is dark coloured, you need to drink more fluids. Pee should ideally be clear or very pale yellow, it should not be very smelly, and you should make quite a bit of it.

If you can go for hours without peeing, and your pee is dark yellow/gold and smelly, you need to drink more water.

The RedBranch Pee Checklist:

1. *Lots of wee*
2. *Light colour*
3. *Little smell*



Top Tips for Staying Hydrated

Follow these top tips to keep yourself hydrated and healthy:

- Keep a bottle of water with you all day, and sip frequently when you take a break.
- Drink when exercising, especially when it's hot.
- Don't drink too much tea or coffee.
- Avoid fizzy drinks...they contain too much sugar and are very acidic.
- A dash of fruit juice or a slice of lemon/lime added to a jug of water makes a tasty treat for your family. Try adding cranberry, orange, or apple juice to some sparkling water.
- Sip frequently rather than guzzling, and drink as soon as you feel thirsty.
- Remember that water tastes better when it's cold.
- Soup is a great way to keep hydrated.

What About Sports Drinks?

Just because it says "sport" on the label doesn't make it good for you! These drinks tend to be fairly sugary, and most of the time you'd be better off with water. If you are a serious athlete, contact RedBranch and we will give you guidelines on hydration and refueling for your chosen sport.

The Bottom Line

Keep yourself topped up...stay hydrated!

Water and fruit juices are the best things to drink.

Don't believe the hype when advertisers try to sell you sports drinks and fizzy drinks. These are usually junk dressed up to look good. Fizzy drinks in particular are bad for your health.



Stay hydrated and keep your brain functioning properly.