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Water Intake

How much water should you drink each day? It's a simple question with no easy answers. Studies have produced conflicting guidelines and unsupported publications have added to the confusion. Actually your water needs vary depending on various factors, including your health, how active you are and where you live.

Water is the body's principal chemical component and makes up about 60 percent of the bodies weight. Every system in the body depends on water. For example, water flushes toxins out of vital organs, carries nutrients to cells and provides a moist environment for ear, nose and throat tissues.

Lack of water can lead to dehydration, which means you don't have enough water in your body to carry out normal functions. Even mild dehydration can drain your energy and make you tired.

How much water do you need?

Every day you lose water through your breath, perspiration, urine and bowel movements. For your body to function properly, you must replenish its water supply by consuming beverages and foods that contain water. So how much water does the average, healthy adult living in a temperate climate need? Here are the most common ways of calculating that amount:

- **Body weight approach:** divide your body weight by two to find the number of ounces of water per day.
- **The 8 x 8 rule:** drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day (about 1.9 liters).
- **Dietary recommendations:** The Institute of Medicine advises that men consume roughly 3 liters (about 13 cups) of total beverages a day and women consume 2.2 liters (about 9 cups) of total beverages a day.

I recommend an approach that is customized to your body and circumstances

Drink enough fluid so that you rarely feel thirsty and produce 1.5 quarts or more of colorless or slightly yellow urine a day.