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# H<sub>2</sub>O to Go—Staying Hydrated Safely!

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## Contents

- 1 Why Do We Need to Stay Hydrated?
- 1 How Much Water Should We Drink?
- 2 What Are Safe Sources of Water and Other Fluids?
- 2 How to Use and Care for Reusable Water Bottles
- 2 Conclusion
- 2 References



## Why Do We Need to Stay Hydrated?

WATER MAKES UP ABOUT 60% of our body weight and is our main chemical component. We need water for our cells, tissues, and organs to function properly. Water helps us get rid of waste, regulate our body temperature, lubricate and cushion our joints, and protect sensitive tissues. Not getting enough water can lead to dehydration, which causes tiredness, confusion, headaches, and other unpleasant conditions.

## How Much Water Should We Drink?

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Mayo Clinic, the following are the recommended amounts of fluids you should drink daily (includes water, other beverages, and fluid provided in food, the last which typically makes up 20% of what we need each day):

- About 15.5 cups (3.7 l) of fluids a day for men
- About 11.5 cups (2.7 l) of fluids a day for women

“Drink eight 8 oz glasses of water a day” is also easy-to-remember advice. Most people can stay hydrated by drinking water and other fluids throughout the day when thirsty, but for some eight glasses a day may not be enough. Several factors determine an individual’s water needs:

- **Exercise.** If you sweat during activities, you will need to drink extra water to replace fluid loss.
- **Environment/Temperature.** Living and exercising in hot and humid climates can make you sweat and lead to dehydration, which can also occur at high altitudes.
- **Overall health.** When you have a fever or experience vomiting or diarrhea, your body loses fluids, so you will need to increase your intake of fluids to replace their loss. Other conditions like bladder infections and certain medications may worsen dehydration as well. Follow a health provider’s recommendations to replace fluid losses.

For most people, daily fluid intake is adequate if you rarely feel thirsty and your urine is colorless or light yellow. A doctor or registered dietitian can help you to determine the amount of water that is right for you every day.

## What Are Safe Sources of Water and Other Fluids?

The average person gets 80% of their daily fluid intake from water and other drinks and 20% from food. It is important that all sources of fluid are safe and clean for consumption to prevent foodborne illness. To ensure this, follow these recommendations:

- Handwashing—Before eating, drinking, and preparing meals or snacks, be sure to wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm running water.
- Food—Consume produce free from mold, bruises, or cuts in the skin. Wash produce under water and brush it to remove dirt, debris, and bacteria. Ensure that foods such as yogurt, pudding, ice cream or frozen treats, and soups are properly sealed before purchase.
- Water and beverages—Only drink water and beverages from safe sources (such as sealed bottles and cans) purchased from a store or from an approved source (such as your home tap, water and beverage fountains, or refilling stations). If you are not sure the water source is safe, do not drink from it.

For more information, call your local health department and ask about approved drinking sources and about getting your home tap and/or well water tested.

## How to Use and Care for Reusable Water Bottles

Using a reusable water bottle is not only a convenient way to drink the recommended amount of daily fluids per day, it also offers public and private benefits. It contributes less waste to our environment, because it reduces one-time-use plastic bottle waste. When individuals have access to an approved water source, a reusable water bottle is also less expensive than bottled water. To ensure that you are drinking uncontaminated water that will not promote foodborne illness, follow these recommendations for the proper use and care of reusable water bottles:

- Hand-wash every day—Use soap, warm water, and a brush to clean the inside and outside of your bottle. Then rinse it out and leave it to air dry.

- Sanitize once a week—Soak bottle parts in sanitizing solution for two minutes, rinse, and air dry. Sanitizing Solution: mix ½ tsp of 8.25% bleach with 4 cups of water.
- Avoid spreading germs—Do not share your water bottle with someone else, keep your bottle free from dirt and dust, and wash your hands throughout the day.
- Practice other safe habits—Do not add fresh water to an already used water bottle that has been stored in a backpack or car for days. The bottle may be contaminated and need to be washed before adding fresh water.

## Conclusion

Water is a basic need for human survival and overall health. Drinking water and consuming foods and beverages with notable fluid content is a great way to meet the daily recommendation for fluid intake. However, it is important that the water and other fluids you drink or eat are safe. If you use a reusable water bottle to meet your daily fluid requirement, follow the proper cleaning and care steps to avoid a foodborne illness.

## References

- Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, “Get the Facts: Drinking Water and Intake”: <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/data-statistics/plain-water-the-healthier-choice.html>.
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