

# Stay hydrated in all times



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It is common knowledge that it is important to drink plenty of fluids when the temperatures go up like right now in summers. But, staying hydrated is important not only in hot weather conditions but also throughout the year.

Water is one of the vital nutrients necessary for our health and wellbeing. An average adult human body contains 50-65% water. The Harvard Medical School Special Health Report notes that water performs several important functions in our body such as- carrying nutrients and oxygen to your cells, flushing bacteria from your bladder, aiding digestion, preventing constipation, normalizing blood pressure, stabilizing the heartbeat, cushioning joints, protecting organs and tissues, regulating body temperature, maintaining electrolyte balance etc. Providing your body with enough fluids to perform all the above mentioned tasks is called staying hydrated. Hydration is a term used to describe state of water balance or water content in our bodies. There are three states of hydration- hypohydration or dehydration, euhydration or normal hydration, and hyperhydration or excess hydration.

The body has no provision for storage of water. Therefore, the amount of water lost every 24 hours must be replaced to maintain healthy state of hydration. There is a lot of confusion about how much water should one be drinking. The hydration needs of the body can generally be fulfilled by deciding how much water to drink and when to drink based on thirst. However, the hydration needs change depending on factors such as the ambient temperature, humidity, kind of physical activity and specific health conditions of the person. For example, athletes lose about 1.5 - 2.0 kg of body weight from fluid loss when exercising above temperatures of 25°C and low humidity.

Maintaining adequate hydration is important especially during endurance activities such as long distance running and cycling for management of heat stress and for prevention of exercise-induced muscle cramping. For these reasons, several recent guidelines recommend that the fluid loss during exercise should not exceed 2% of body mass.

Several problems arise from the imbalanced state of hydration, whether it is dehydration or excessive hydration. Dehydration can cause fatigue, nausea, weakness, muscle cramps, disorientation, slurred speech and confusion etc. Over hydration on the other hand can cause exercise associated hyponatremia (EAH) or water intoxication. EAH can produce symptoms of fatigue, mental disorientation, gait alterations, breathing difficulty or no symptoms at all, making it difficult to diagnose and

differentiate from dehydration without the help of a trained medical professional.

These general guidelines will help you prevent both dehydration and water intoxication:

1. There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to how much water a person should drink on a daily basis. Listen to your body and drink water when you are thirsty, even on the days you don't workout.
2. Take small sips of water periodically throughout the day rather than loading up with large quantities of water fewer times during the day.
3. During your workouts or endurance activities such as runs and cycling, drink according to the rate of sweating. The chances of dehydration during an activity lasting less than one hour are very low. So you don't need to overload yourself with water.
4. There is no need for drinking sports drinks on a daily basis even during activity. Sports drinks are usually sources of not only minerals but also carbohydrates which will add excess calories to your intake if not monitored and regulated carefully. Limit the intake of sports drinks to occasions where your runs last longer than a couple of hours in high temperatures.
5. Schedule your workouts or runs to a cooler time of the day to control loss of water through sweating and increased body temperatures.
6. Please continue to hydrate even after you complete the run/activity as per the thirst signals given by your body. But avoid drinking water in excess to prevent water intoxication.
7. Apart from water or sports drinks, you can also get your water from the foods that you eat. Include fresh fruits such as watermelon, oranges, apples, papaya etc. as part of your daily diet to help you with hydration. Other foods such as milk, curd, buttermilk, salads, soups and traditional Indian dishes such as rasam and sambar can also contribute to your daily hydration requirements.

A healthy nutritional status which is a result of healthy lifestyle goes a long way in conditioning your body to regulate hydration. So eat well, stay healthy and enjoy your summer runs!