

What Every Runner Should Know About Hydration

(from <http://running.about.com/od/running101/a/hydration101.htm>)

Surely we all know that hydration is important to our health and performance. Most of us have been drilled to believe that 8 glasses of water a day is the way. Many of us even know that the human body is made up of about 66 percent water. That's two-thirds of our mass that depends on us being properly hydrated.

Some other facts about our body's need for water include:

- Our bones are 22 percent water.
- Our blood is 83 percent water.
- Our brains are 95 percent water.
- Our muscles are 75 percent water.
- Our lungs are 93% water.

No wonder we get dizzy, listless, and unfocused as we get dehydrated. Our brain is almost entirely made of water. So, when it starts getting low on water, it can't function at full potential. Other signs of dehydration include:

- dry, itchy skin
- headaches
- thirst
- fatigue
- crankiness
- becoming stressed easily
- unclear thinking
- flushed face
- cramping
- weakness
- sleepiness
- dry mouth
- bloating
- constipation

Obviously, it's worth the effort to maintain hydration by drinking more water. Aside from the problems dehydration alone can cause your body, being dehydrated and exercising (or being out in the heat) can exasperate things immensely.

Water is also the force behind temperature control for our bodies. We sweat to help regulate our body temperature. If we can't sweat (for lack of water), our body temperature spirals up and we quickly find ourselves at risk for heat injuries, like heat cramps, heat stroke, and exhaustion. (Heat stroke is, by the way, deadly. These are not just run-of-the-mill, I'll-feel-better-in-a-day-or-two type problems. These injuries are serious, and should not be taken lightly.)

And if you are trying to lose weight, hydration is even more important. Even if you eat healthy and moderately and exercise, you will not lose weight without drinking enough water. Water is a big part of the metabolic system. It helps convert food into energy instead of fat. Without the enough water, your body will convert more food to fat than to energy. (Of course, there are dangers of overdoing water intake, called hyponatremia. But it is much more rare than dehydration is.)

So... how much is the right amount? Once you know that you can avoid all these problems, lose that extra few pounds, and live happily ever after, so what's the magic number?

Well, the least amount of water that most healthy adults should consume (to maintain hydration) everyday is 8 to 10 cups (8 oz). For people undertaking fitness routines, 12 to 16 cups a day (on days you workout) is best. These amounts of water won't hurt healthy adults. It is easy enough, however, to find the amount of water an individual should consume.

1. Divide your weight by half. So, if you weigh 160, you should try to drink 80 oz of water per day. Divide the ounces by 8 to get cups. $80/8 = 10$ cups. This is the amount to drink just to make up for our normal daily losses through sweat, urine, exhaled air and bowel movements. This doesn't take into account running.
2. Add another cup for each half hour of exercise that day. If you workout for one hour or more, replace every other half hour's cup of water with a sports drink.

For example, let's say you weigh 140. Everyday you should drink 70 oz of water, or about 9 cups. Now let's say on Monday you workout for 2 hours. So on Monday you need your normal 9 cups + 2 hours worth of working out (4 cups). So 13 cups altogether, but make 2 cups Gatorade since you worked out for 2 hours straight. Working out that long, you need to start replacing salt and electrolytes. On Tuesday, let's say you workout for 30 min. So, on Tuesday, you would just drink your normal 9 cups + 1 cup from working out. 10 cups total.

Hydration is that simple. The hard part is doing it!