

# Keeping Hydrated

Information for people who may be at risk of dehydration.

## Why is hydration important?

Our bodies are made up of 60 to 75% water and keeping adequately hydrated helps us to stay fit and healthy. Fluid has important functions for our bodies including:

- preventing **urinary tract infections** (UTI's) and **confusion**
- reducing our risk of **falls** and cushioning our joints and spine
- helping to prevent **pressure sores** and deliver nutrients to the affected areas
- reducing **constipation** by softening our bowel movements
- helping our **blood pressure** stay healthy
- producing mucus which helps us to fight off **infections**
- helping our **kidneys** to stay healthy, reducing the risk of **acute kidney injury**



## How much do I need to drink?

Ideally, we should aim to drink at least 1.5 to 2 litres per day (about 8 cups of fluid). We will need to drink more in warmer climates or if we are more active or very active as we lose more fluid through sweat. Also, if we are unwell and suffer from diarrhoea or vomiting then we will need extra fluid to replenish those losses (re-hydration salts are available from chemists).

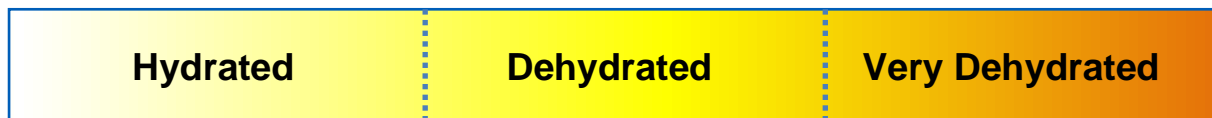
Use the table below to help you achieve your 8 cups a day (remember any fluid except alcohol counts). Tick each box every time you have a drink.

Number of cups per day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Day One	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Two	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Three	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Four	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Five	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Six	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Seven	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## How do I know if I am drinking enough?

Urine colour is a good sign of how hydrated you are. Look at the picture below to see how hydrated you are.



Other symptoms of dehydration may include dry mouth or lips, thirst, headaches, dry skin with little elasticity, tiredness, and confusion.

## What types of fluid count as my 8 cups a day?

Water is a good source for most of us as it contains no extra calories. Tea, coffee, milk, fruit juice and no added sugar squash can also be included. If you are not eating well and need to maintain or build up your weight then choosing nourishing drinks such as full cream milk, hot chocolates and malted milk drinks can be helpful to maximise your nutritional intake. Alcohol does not count.

## Will drinking more make me go to the toilet more often?

When we drink more, we may go to the toilet more often initially. However, studies have shown our bladder then adjusts and eventually returns to normal. Drinking less is counterproductive as it concentrates our urine which irritates the lining of the bladder making us more susceptible to UTI's. If you are worried about the initial increase in trips to the toilet, then you may find it helpful to try to have at least half of your fluid intake before midday.

## Tips to help you hydrate

- Try carrying a bottle of water to work, in the car or by your bedside to prompt you to drink. Tap water is ideal but if you are not keen on plain water then try adding some no added sugar squash or fresh fruit for flavour.
- Avoid large amounts of caffeine or alcohol. Having more than the recommended units of alcohol and/or more than 5 cups of caffeinated drinks such as tea or coffee each day can have a diuretic effect and increase fluid loss. Other drinks which contain caffeine include energy drinks, cola, green tea, and hot chocolate.
- Around 20% of our total fluid requirements come from the foods we eat. Including plenty of fruits and vegetables in our diet is not only good for our overall health but also good for our hydration as they contain lots of moisture.
- Semi-liquid foods can sometimes be helpful to boost your fluid intake. These may include soups, sauces, yoghurts, jellies, ice-cream and ice lollies.
- Try to have a drink after each meal and avoid filling up on fluids just before meals.

