

How to calculate how much water you should drink

An estimate and the actual amount of water you should be drinking per day can vary quite significantly. There are multiple factors that can impact how much water you should be drinking.

Weight

Your weight is one variable that changes the amount of water you should be drinking. To help you establish a baseline, you can use the following rule-of-thumb equation described in *U.S. News & World Report*.

How much water you should drink, before factoring in physical activity

$$\text{Calculation: } \frac{\text{your weight}}{\text{weight}} \times 0.5 = \frac{\text{oz. of water}}{\text{per day}}$$

$$\text{Example: } 200 \text{ lbs} \times 0.5 = \frac{100 \text{ oz.}}{\text{per day}}$$

In short, the equation tells you to take half your body weight and drink that amount in ounces of water. In the example, notice that you should be drinking more than 12 glasses of water, not eight!

Exercise

Your exercise habits affect the amount of water you should be drinking, as well. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends adding 12 ounces of water to your daily intake for every 30 minutes that you plan to work out.

How much water you should drink, when factoring in physical activity

$$\text{Calculation: previous result} + \left(\frac{X \text{ minutes of exercise}}{30 \text{ minutes}} \times 12 \text{ oz.} \right) = \text{oz. of water per day}$$

$$\text{Example: } 100 + \left(\frac{60 \text{ minutes of exercise}}{30 \text{ minutes}} \times 12 \text{ oz.} \right) = 124 \text{ oz. per day}$$

If you are exercising outside and it is very hot, you may need to add more.

Special considerations

There are several special considerations to maintaining a healthy hydration level. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you need to increase your fluid intake by 24 to 32 ounces depending on how much you weigh, according to the American Pregnancy Association. It is also important that you get a lot of your hydration from water. If you are primarily drinking sodas or caffeinated beverages such as coffee or tea, you do not get as much "bang for your buck" when it comes to fluid intake (i.e., they don't "count" as much).

Rules of thumb

The good news is there are some easy rules of thumb to follow when it comes to hydration. One of the important ones is to pre-hydrate. In other words, drink BEFORE you start feeling thirsty, or BEFORE you do an activity. Going running? Drink several glasses of water before you start. Thirst is a sign of dehydration, so if you feel thirsty, you have some catching up to do!

Also, monitor your urine. If you are adequately hydrated, you should be urinating about once every two to four hours, and your urine should be colorless or a very pale yellow (the color of hay or lighter). If it is darker than that, you haven't had enough fluid. Headaches and dizziness are a late sign of dehydration. If you start experiencing those, you really need to up the water intake.