

HIV Nutrition Education

Nutrition Fact Sheet



Water



Water is the most important nutrient consumed on a daily basis and the body cannot survive without it. While it contains no calories, water is needed by every cell in the body to do its work to support life. These functions include digestion, absorption, and removal of fats, proteins, carbohydrates and other body substances. Water also is vital to regulate body temperature, lubricate joints, and to make food easier to chew and swallow. Water is the largest single component of the body with the highest concentration found in muscle and organ tissue. Water makes up about 60% of body weight and 90% of blood.

In general, adults need about 8-12 cups of water or other caffeine-free fluids a day. That is 64 to 96 ounces or 2 to 3 liters, and about the amount lost each day under normal conditions. If a person is experiencing diarrhea, constipation, vomiting, fever or excessive sweating, taking in more fluids is necessary.

The body does not have large water reserves so it is necessary to drink water everyday to avoid dehydration. Dehydration can cause big problems in the balance of fluids and electrolytes and, if not corrected quickly, will affect physical and mental performance and is life threatening. Loss of 20% of body water can cause death. Body fluids are normally lost through sweat, exhaled air, skin, urine and feces. Losses are increased and the needs are greater when a person is experiencing diarrhea or vomiting, fever, burns, taking certain medications and during prolonged exercise. Feeling thirsty is a signal to drink fluids. The sensation may not occur or be recognized quickly enough particularly during prolonged exercise, when sick or in the elderly. Avoid being thirsty by drinking fluids throughout the day. Sometimes hunger is mistaken for thirst.

Early or mild dehydration may not have any symptoms. Symptoms of dehydration can include:

Flushed face	Dark urine	Headaches	Irritable
Dry, warm skin	Reduced or no urine output	Inability to concentrate	Nausea
Dry eyes, mouth, nose	Extreme thirst	Weakness	Sleepy
Sunken eyes	Unable to drink	Dizziness	Listless
Arm and leg cramps	Deep and rapid breathing		

It is important to drink water that is safe to avoid waterborne illness. The words "purified" or "filtered" on the label of bottled do not promise the water is free of cryptosporidium. To practice water safety:

- Do not drink from lakes, rivers, streams or springs.
- Bring tap water to a rolling boil for at least one minute, cool and store in clean containers in the refrigerator.
- Drink bottled water that is either processed by distillation or reverse osmosis. Check the label on the bottle or call the 800 number and see how the water was processed.
- Use a filter tested and certified by NSF Standard #53 or #58 for cyst reduction and cyst removal.
- Use a filter size that is one absolute micron or less.
- Avoid filling containers from water dispensing machines unless safety can be verified.
- Use "safe" water in making ice cubes or other beverages. Avoid ice cubes if you don't know they are safe.
- Take extra precautions when traveling outside of the United States.
- Drink plenty of fluids every day. Carry safe fluids and a snack with you every time you leave the house.

Fruits and vegetables can be a good source of water. Foods contain water of varying amounts:

Food Item	Collards, Lettuce, Radishes	Watermelon, Broccoli, Beets	Milk, Carrots, Orange	Boiled Potato, Banana	Chicken (roasted)	Beef Loin or Sirloin	Bread	Swiss Cheese	Oil
%	96	91	87	77-70	67	59	42	37	0

For more information or to sign up for a nutrition class call:

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