

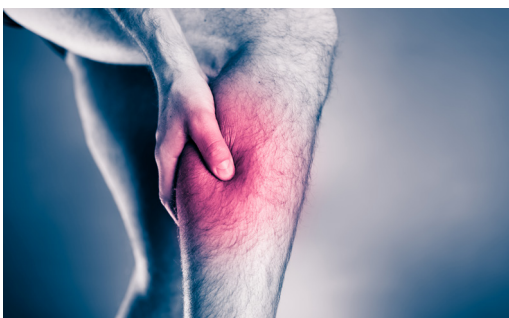


HYDRATION IN COLD WEATHER

BE
INJURY
FREE

Keep Sipping That Water

Dehydration is possible even in the long, cold days of winter. It can be dangerous too because the body does not sense thirst as well when it's cold outside. Mild dehydration can affect mood and mental performance. For example, you may experience increased fatigue, confusion, and anger, as well as decreased concentration, short-term memory, and reaction time. These may lead to an increased risk of injury. The more dehydrated you are, the worse the signs and symptoms can get. Staying hydrated, on the other hand, will keep your blood pressure normal, protect and cushion your joints and organs, control your body temperature, and keep you aware and alert. A common theory suggests that dehydration may worsen muscle cramps – yet another reason to keep sipping, especially when you are physically active. You're at your best both mentally and physically when you are well hydrated!



Fluid Loss During The Colder Months

Many factors affect the rate at which the body loses fluid during the winter. Breathing in cold, dry air increases water loss, because it needs to be warmed and moistened before reaching the lungs. Physical activity in cold weather also increases fluid loss because of heavier and deeper breathing. Furthermore, you may experience cold diuresis, where your body produces more urine as a side effect of conserving heat. Wearing too much clothing may also increase sweating and fluid loss, which may not be noticeable because sweat vaporizes quickly in the cold.

Signs & Symptoms of Dehydration

Know the signs and symptoms of dehydration and don't ignore them. A good rule of thumb is to drink when you are thirsty, because thirst is a symptom of mild dehydration. The colour of your urine can give you some insight too. If it's pale yellow or clear, you're likely drinking enough. If it's darker yellow or amber, you're likely dehydrated. Other signs and symptoms include dry lips or mouth, tiredness, mood swings, headache, flushed skin, dizziness, and fainting.

If you become severely dehydrated, you may experience confusion, seizures, and loss of consciousness, putting you at an increased risk of injury during work or play.

Take Care of Family Members

Children and older adults are at a greater risk of dehydration. The developing bodies of children are less capable of controlling body temperature and they are less likely to realize the need to hydrate. Meanwhile, older adults have a reduced sense of thirst and may not drink as much water as they need. Dizziness, confusion, and other symptoms of dehydration may put them at an increased risk for falls, making it especially important for them to stay hydrated. Older adults may also take medication that increases their risk of dehydration, such as diuretics (commonly known as “water pills”) for blood pressure. If medication is a suspected cause of dehydration, discuss your concerns with your healthcare provider.

Here are some great ways to stay hydrated, all day, every day:

- Keep water at your workspace so you can sip and stay alert.
- Have water with your meals and snacks.
- Eat whole vegetables and fruits: they can be hydrating too! Try zucchini, tomatoes, sweet peppers, oranges, pears, and apples.
- Flavour your water with a combination of sliced cucumbers, citrus fruits, herbs, melons, or berries for a refreshing taste.
- Drink more water when you are physically active.
- You lose heat faster when you are wet, so stick with layers that you can easily put on or take off to avoid being too warm or cold.
- Avoid 100% cotton clothing, because it will draw heat from your body.

Drink Up!

Water is your best choice for hydration. Plain milk, unsweetened milk alternatives, and unsweetened coffee or tea (with or without milk) are other healthier beverage options. Sugar-sweetened beverages should be avoided because their fluid comes with a hefty price - lots of calories (e.g., 500 ml of pop has 200 calories).

The amount of fluid you need depends on many factors, including age, gender, physical activity levels, temperature, humidity, and airflow. The advice to drink eight glasses of water each day is a myth and does not take into account these factors. What is most important is to drink water regularly to avoid dehydration and help prevent injuries at work and at home. Keep water close to you, sip often, and don't wait until you feel thirsty!



Key Reference:

Popkin, B.M., D'Anci, K.E., & Rosenberg, I.H. (2010). Water, hydration, and health. *Nutrition Reviews*, 68(8), 439-458. <https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fj.1753-4887.2010.00304.x>