

# Are you thirsty?

**Water is essential for life. It makes up about 60 per cent of our bodies, and we can only live three to five days without drinking.**

Here are some answers to common questions about drinking water.

## How much water should I drink?

Most adults should drink at least two litres of water a day.

You may need to drink more than this if you:

- live in a hot or humid climate
- are pregnant or breastfeeding
- are carrying out physical activity or exercising
- are at an altitude above 2,500 metres
- are unwell

If you are unwell with diarrhoea and vomiting it is very important that you drink more water than usual to avoid becoming dehydrated. Severe dehydration can be very dangerous for babies and young children.

## How will I know if I am dehydrated?

If you are dehydrated, you may experience some or all of the following symptoms:

- thirst
- urine that is darker and stronger smelling than usual
- less need to go to the toilet
- constipation
- headache
- stomach cramps
- dizziness
- difficulty concentrating
- tiredness

It is important not to ignore these signs. Drink water as soon as possible, preferably in the form of rehydration solution.

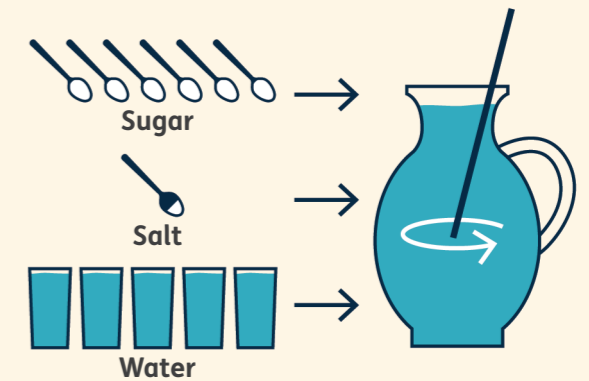


## Is it possible to drink too much water?

If you have become dehydrated, do not drink too much water at once. Drink a small amount at regular intervals over the course of several hours to allow your body to recover gradually. If you drink too much water at once it can cause mineral imbalances and make you feel unwell.

## Make your own oral rehydration solution

Wash hands and utensils carefully. Add six level teaspoons of sugar and half a level teaspoon of salt to one litre (five cups) of safe drinking water. Stir until the sugar dissolves.



Encourage someone who is suffering from diarrhoea to drink as much of this solution as they can to help prevent dehydration and replace essential minerals lost from the body. This is particularly important for children. If they are vomiting, they should take small sips at regular intervals.

## How can I increase the amount of water I drink?

It is a good idea to keep a note of how much water you are drinking a day so you can work out if you are drinking enough. If you discover that you need to drink more water, try some or all of the following:

- Link drinking water with a routine that you do every day. For example, drink some water in the morning as soon as you wake up.
- Always take water with you when you travel or go to work, and make sure you drink it.
- Make water more interesting by adding well-washed fruit, cucumber, mint or ginger.
- Increase the amount of water you consume in food, for example by eating soup or fresh fruit and vegetables.

**Start right now and have a drink of water – your body will thank you for it!**

Allison Liu is a Health Coach based in the UK