

Healthy eating

Lifestyle benefits

Drinking water isn't just about keeping hydrated; there are a number of health and lifestyle benefits to be derived, including:

- Managing your weight;
- Improving your energy;
- Enhancing your appearance; and
- Managing the effects of alcohol.



Managing your weight

Drinking more water has some significant benefits for managing your weight:

Lack of energy - inadequate hydration contributes significantly to lack of energy, and your brain will misinterpret this tiredness as a need to eat more food. Feeling low on energy is one of the biggest challenges we face, and we often blame lack of food for our tiredness, reaching for an instant sugar fix for an energy boost. The result is we end up taking in unnecessary calories.

Staving off hunger - water makes us feel more satisfied with the food we have eaten. It bulks up food, stretching the stomach wall, which sends messages to the brain to tell us we're full; so we tend to eat less. So always drink a glass of water before your meal; and sip water during your meal.

Reduces calorie intake - a lot of us quench thirst with tea, coffee and fizzy drinks rather than water. These drinks can contribute to dehydration and they can also be full of unnecessary calories.

For example - an average skinny latte has 102 calories; add caramel and this increases to around 195 calories. So two skinny lattes a day can equal 390 calories, which over 5 days would equal half a pound of potential weight gain. On the other hand, 2 glasses of water a day instead equals no calories and no potential weight gain

over the week. How many coffees do you drink a day? And are they skinny ones? If not, potential weight gain will be even higher.

Dehydration hampers weight loss - fat can only be properly broken down in the body in the presence of water. If there isn't enough water, the body can't break down fat efficiently, so it will store fat that it hasn't broken down and use other energy sources instead.

Managing your energy

Help energise yourself - drinking water is one of the best things you can do to energise yourself when you're feeling lethargic. That's because it creates the right environment in your body's cells for your metabolism to work effectively; and it's your metabolism that generates your energy.

Enhanced alertness - water helps keep you alert and able to concentrate better. That's because so much of the human brain is made up of water, so the cells in the brain need to be properly hydrated for the brain to work effectively.

Toxin management - natural toxins in the body can sap our energy levels; water aids the elimination of these toxins from the body. We need water to flush these toxins out.

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Lifestyle benefits contd

Enhancing your appearance

When we're dehydrated our body has less water in its cells and the cells can't then work as effectively as they should. If we're dehydrated on an on-going basis, the body's automatic survival system will be to direct water to those cells in the core of the body and those cells that are needed for essential functions. When this happens one of the first sets of cells to lose water will be the cells of the skin.

So not drinking water regularly throughout the day will cause your skin to dehydrate. Your complexion will suffer - it won't appear as clear and as fresh as it could do. If you're dehydrated your skin will become dry and prolonged dehydration will cause premature ageing and wrinkling, particularly to your facial skin. The plumpness of the skin influences how clear your complexion is and the ability of your facial skin to withstand the potential damage caused by the wind, the sun and the cold. The plumpness of the skin is determined by how well hydrated your skin's cells are.

Managing the effects of alcohol

Alcohol is a diuretic; and it's this diuretic effect that also influences how we feel the morning after having a drink or two too many. So keeping hydrated when you want to go out for a few drinks is essential. Here are some top tips for keeping hydrated on a night out:

Before going out:

- Drink plenty of water because the more alcohol you drink the less water the body retains.

During the evening:

- Ideally, try to have a drink of water with each alcoholic drink;
- Alternating alcoholic and soft drinks will also help to naturally reduce the amount of alcohol you drink; and
- Alcohol contains congeners, which are impurities from the distilling process. These are alcoholic toxins that also contribute to hangovers. Dark drinks contain more, so if you are going out for a heavy session keep to light coloured drinks, but just as importantly drinking water will help to flush out these toxins and minimise their effect.

Before bed:

- It's important to keep as hydrated as possible to stave off headaches. The headache in a hangover is caused by dehydration. Because alcohol causes significant dehydration; water is lost from the brain causing it to shrink. It's this shrinking that leads to a headache. So drink as much water as you comfortably can before going to bed.

