

Dehydration in Older Adults

Adults who are not properly hydrated may age more quickly and face a higher risk of chronic diseases, such as lung disease, heart failure, diabetes, and stroke.

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Why older adults need to stay hydrated

A recent [National Institutes of Health study](#) indicates that adults not adequately hydrated may age more rapidly. They also face an increased risk of chronic diseases, including lung disease, heart failure, diabetes, and stroke, and are more likely to have a shorter lifespan compared to those who maintain proper hydration.

We tend to drink less as we age

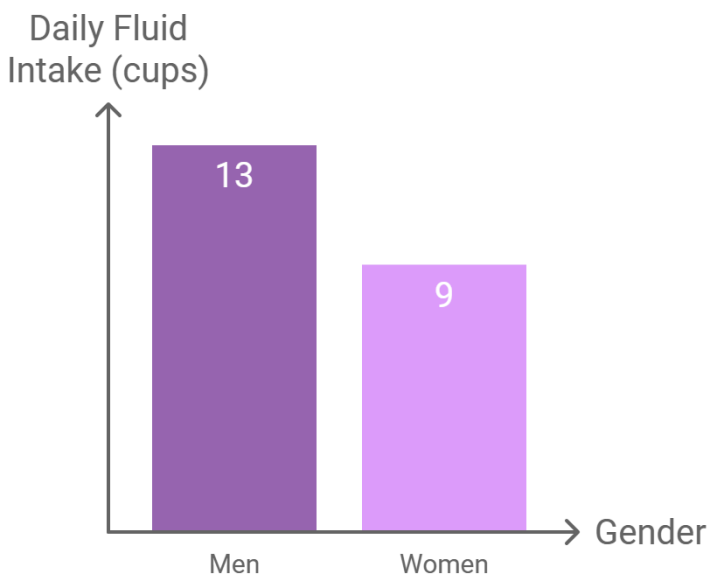
As we age, changes in body composition lead to reduced water content in our bodies. Many people drink less water, which can lead to chronic underhydration. Medications like diuretics can disrupt water balance, and concerns about incontinence may cause some older adults to limit their intake. Additionally, the feeling of thirst often decreases with age.

How much does an older adult need to drink?

As a general guideline, take one-third of your body weight and drink that number of ounces in fluids daily.

It has been widely suggested to drink eight glasses of water each day. This advice gained popularity in 1945 when the U.S. Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council formally endorsed adequate water intake.

The U.S. National Academy of Medicine now suggests an adequate intake of daily fluids of about 13 cups for men and 9 cups for women aged 51 and older.

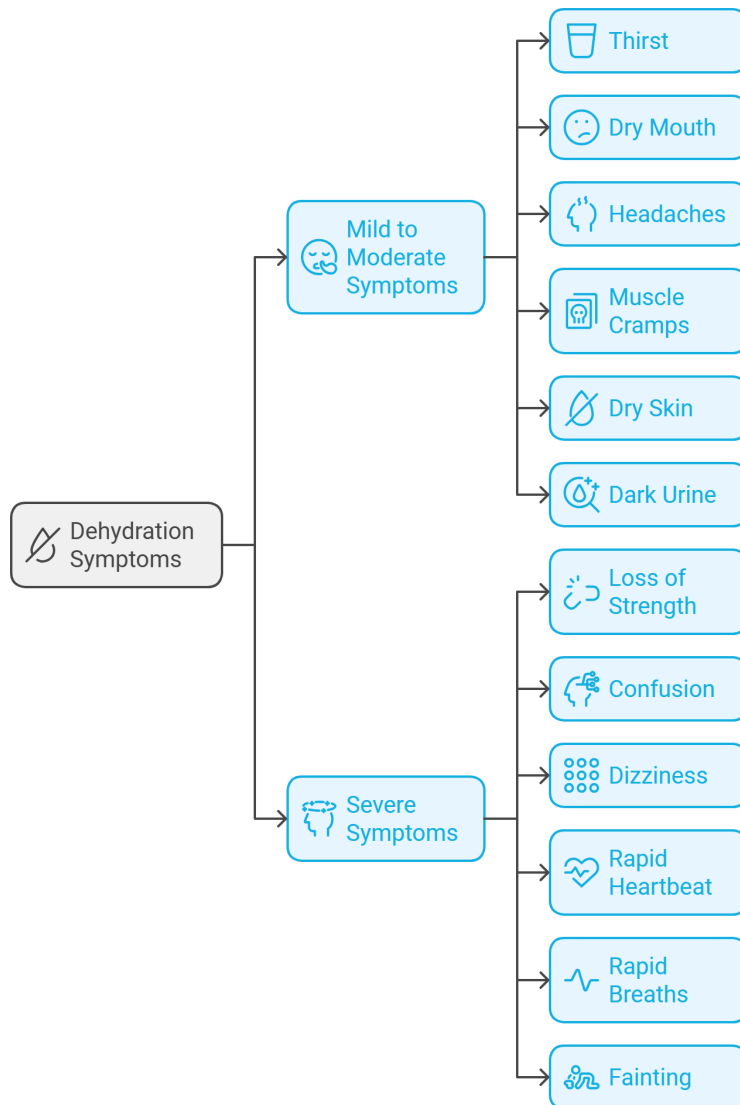


Recommended Daily Fluid Intake for Adults
Aged 51 and Older

All fluid sources, including water, food, and beverages, count toward daily intake. It's best to consult your doctor to determine your specific hydration needs.

Symptoms of dehydration

Mild to moderate symptoms may include: feeling thirsty, dry mouth, headaches, muscle cramps, dry skin and dark urine. Severe symptoms may include: loss of strength, confusion, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, rapid breaths and fainting



Benefits of water

Drinking water can help:

- **Boost blood circulation.** Water helps maintain the right consistency of blood to deliver oxygen and nutrients effectively.
- **Improve your digestion.** Water helps your body break down and process the food you consume. Additionally, adequate fluid intake softens stool and prevents constipation.
- **Maintain your joints.** They need to be well-lubricated to work and last.
- **Protect your kidneys.** Staying hydrated can help prevent kidney stones and urinary tract infections. Additionally, proper hydration aids your kidneys in eliminating toxins and waste from your body.
- **Boost skin appearance.** Drinking water helps keep your skin clear and wrinkle-free. It can also stave off certain skin disorders.
- **Protect your teeth.** Water keeps your mouth clean and lowers your risk for tooth decay.

Tips to stay hydrated

1. Make a habit of sipping water regularly throughout the day.
2. Keep a refillable water bottle with you.
3. Place a water pitcher and cup near your seating area at home.
4. Add slices of lemon, cucumber, apple, or berries to your water.
5. Include more foods with high water content in your diet. Cantaloupe, strawberries, watermelon, lettuce, celery, spinach, and cooked squash are over 90 percent water, while yogurt, apples, grapes, oranges, carrots, pears, pineapples, and cooked broccoli are 80 to 89 percent water.
6. In addition to the water, mix it up with low-sugar sports drinks. But don't overdo it on drinks with added sugar, and try to limit caffeine, as caffeine is a diuretic that can lead to fluid loss.

Though experts may not agree on the precise amount of water we should drink to meet the total daily dietary reference intake for overall water consumption, this is clear: It is essential to keep hydrated.

Sources:

Do You Really Need 8 Glasses of Water a Day?

<https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2023/how-much-water-should-you-drink-a-day.html>

Good hydration linked to healthy aging

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/good-hydration-linked-healthy-aging>

How to Stay Hydrated for Better Health

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/how-to-stay-hydrated-for-better-health/>

How Much Water You Should Drink Every Day

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-much-water-do-you-need-daily>

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