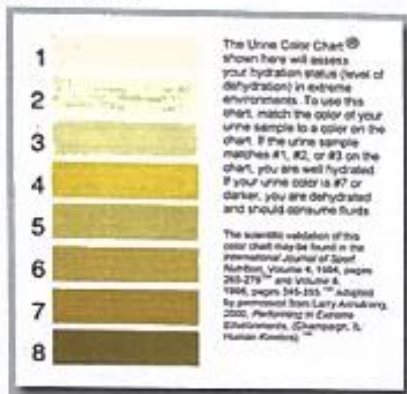


Hydration and Dehydration, Mistaking Hunger for Thirst

Water is vital to healthy cell structure and function. Without it, we are at risk of dehydration, which can lead to dizziness, fatigue, headache and other symptoms due to a suboptimal cellular environment. Additionally, studies have shown that drinking water has weight loss benefits. Drinking a glass of water prior to a meal will decrease your appetite, resulting in fewer calories consumed during mealtime (1). Throughout the day, sometimes we mistake thirst for hunger, leading to the unnecessary consumption of calories. In fact, this is often the case. Dehydration symptoms, such as tiredness, dizziness, or lightheadedness can overlap the symptoms of hunger (5). For these reasons, it is best to try drinking some water before reaching for a snack. Water might satisfy your urge to eat. A glass of water may also wake you up.

Drinking water is not the only way to stay hydrated. Fruits and vegetables also have a water content. Many people think coffee has dehydrating effects; this is true for occasional coffee drinkers. Studies show that regular coffee drinkers may develop a tolerance to the diuretic (dehydrating) effects of caffeine (3).

Urine Test



An at-home, simple hydration evaluation you can do is the urine test. Simply use this color chart to match how well hydrated you are.

Text: The Urine Color Chart shown here will assess your hydration status (level of dehydration), To use this chart, match the color of your urine sample to a color on the chart. If the urine sample matches #1, #2, or #3 on the chart, you are well hydrated. If your urine color is #7 or darker, you are dehydrated and should consume fluids.

Dehydration and Mental Abilities

In addition to its physical benefits, there is growing evidence that water enhances mental performance too. Many people do not realize how much water they lose from sweat, especially during warm weather. Failure to replace the liquid lost, can result in mild dehydration, which affects our mental function. One study found that dehydrated women had 12% more errors on a cognitive flexibility test than women who were properly hydrated (2).

Dehydration in the Elderly

Elderly people are at a higher risk of dehydration. As the body ages, it stores less water, and develops a decreased sense of thirst, leading to less water consumption. Reduced thirst sensation may be caused by lower awareness of dry mucous membranes in the mouth, as well as decreased sensitivity to hormone changes and concentration of water in the blood. Medications, memory problems, urinary incontinence, decreased mobility and more reliance on others for care can result in dehydration. The elderly are also at an increased risk of reduced mental function caused by dehydration. Dehydrated people may have increased confusion (4).

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3) Aubrey, Allison. "Coffee Myth-Busting: Cup Of Joe May Help Hydration And Memory." *NPR*, NPR, 13 Jan. 2014, www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/01/13/262175623/coffee-myth-busting-cup-of-joe-may-help-hydration-and-memory.

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