



# HOW MUCH WATER DO YOU REALLY NEED?

**AUTHOR**

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**W**ith many of us being busier over the summer months, as we head outdoors, remembering to keep ourselves well-hydrated doesn't always take priority. However, making sure we get enough water is crucial to ensure that we are functioning at our best.

## Why do we need Water?

Water accounts for 50 - 80 percent of our body weight is crucial for life. It is a component of our blood, brain and body tissue, as well as being needed for digestion, absorption, elimination of waste and regulating our body's temperature. When we don't get enough water through the fluids we drink and the food we eat, dehydration can result.

Dehydration of as little as 2 percent loss in body weight can result in impaired functioning and performance.

### Common signs of Dehydration:

- dry mouth
- headaches
- dark coloured, smelly urine
- constipation
- headaches
- sunken and/or dry, flaky skin
- fatigue

## How much water do we need?

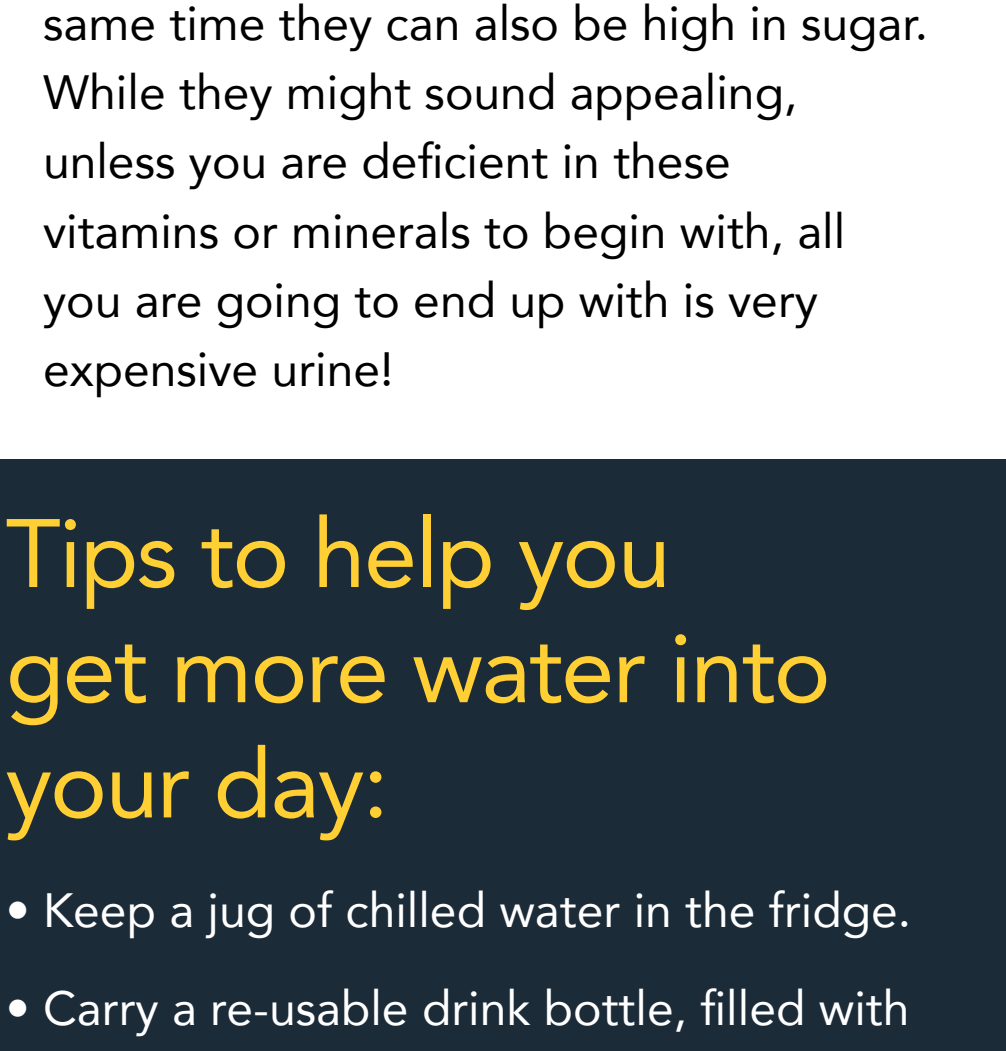
The Nutrient Reference Values (NRVs) for Australians and New Zealanders (2006) recommend an Adequate Intake of 2.1 L per day for women and 2.6 L per day for men. This equates to approximately 8 - 10 cups of water and is where the 8 glasses a day 'rule of thumb' stems from. However, while we need approx. 8 - 10 cups of water per day, this can come from the fluid found in plain water, milk and other beverages. During the summer months when the temperatures are warmer, you may need even more, especially if you are active.

As a guide, check your pee - if your urine is a dark yellow colour, you're not drinking enough. Aim to have your urine pale yellow and clear in colour.

During pregnancy, needs slightly increase to 2.3L per day (or 9 cups). Children require less fluid, with 1-3 year olds needing the least at 1 L per day.

## What are the best sources of fluid to keep us hydrated?

All fluids count however, the New Zealand Ministry of Health recommends that best drink to support your health and to keep you hydrated is water. Plain unsweetened low-fat milk is also a good choice.



### Is bottled water better than tap?

It is a common misconception that bottled water is in fact better for you, than water straight from the tap. Bottled water only refers to the fact that it is water in a bottle! The real issue is around the 'type' of water found in the bottle.

- **Purified or distilled water** - while these may taste 'cleaner' as a result of the minerals being removed. However, this means the fluoride found commonly in fluoridated tap water won't be present, along with other minerals like calcium. Both of these minerals are important for your teeth.

- **Mineral or spring water** - must be sourced from an underground water bearing spring. If it is 'natural' it is not allowed to be treated in any way.

- **Protein water** - these waters contain protein, which it is claimed will help to fill the hunger gap. As protein is a macronutrient, protein waters will also contain more kilojoules (energy) than regular water which provides no energy. These waters may also contain sugar; so make sure you read the food label.

- **Flavoured water** - while these may seem like an appealing option, if you do not like the taste of tap water, they can often contain some sugar! Look for products which contain a nutritive sweetener instead (e.g. stevia). Alternatively, squeeze some lemon or lime into regular unflavoured water.

- **Vitamin and mineral waters** - again some of these taste great, but at the same time they can also be high in sugar. While they might sound appealing, unless you are deficient in these vitamins or minerals to begin with, all you are going to end up with is very expensive urine!

## Tips to help you get more water into your day:

- Keep a jug of chilled water in the fridge.

- Carry a re-usable drink bottle, filled with water, with you wherever you go. Not only will it keep you hydrated but it saves you having to purchase beverages when you're thirsty and cuts back on plastic waste.

## About Angela



Well-respected Dietitian, Angela Berrill is a nutrition educator and an accomplished speaker, writer, and presenter.



To find out how ABC Nutrition's experienced dietitians can help you, head over to their website for more details.

[www.abcnutrition.co.nz](http://www.abcnutrition.co.nz)