

WATER GUIDELINES

I'll risk stating the obvious: you're probably not drinking enough water. I want you to drink half your body weight in water ounces, and I'm aware figuring that number requires a little math. Let's talk numbers. Your body is about 70% water, though because you're probably not drinking enough, your body might be down to 40–50%. Common signs of dehydration include dark urine, dry skin, headaches, and fatigue.

As I noted in *The Virgin Diet*, dehydration isn't always so obvious, and by the time you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated.

For instance, too little water increases chronic inflammation, which means fat loss becomes nearly impossible. On the other hand, a study in *Obesity (Silver Spring)* found drinking water was "associated with significant loss of body weight and fat over time" by boosting metabolism and reducing your appetite.

Whether you want to burn fat, build muscle, or have glowing skin, here are 7 reasons that drinking enough water is that important:

1. Water helps you eat less during your meals. A study in the journal *Obesity (Silver Spring)* found 8 ounces of water before each reduced-calorie meal led to greater fat loss compared to people who didn't drink pre-meal water. Another study presented at the American Chemical Society's annual conference showed 2 glasses of water before every meal helped people lose an average of 15.5 pounds (5 pounds more than the non-water drinkers) over 3 months. Here's the deal: I don't want you drinking too much water during meals, when it can dilute your stomach enzymes that break down protein. Before your meal, drink up!

2. Water can make your skin glow. I've met women who spend hundreds on top-shelf skincare but ironically don't drink enough water, your first-line defense for healthy, glowing skin. Because skin is your body's largest organ, it's also your largest detoxification organ. Perspiration and evaporation continually cleanse your skin and remove waste. Without adequate water, that waste builds up leading to breakouts, acne, and other problems. Poor hydration also means your body can make less new collagen, and the existing collagen becomes brittle.

3. Water helps muscle maintenance and recovery. Muscle tissue is about 75% water, which explains why even 3% dehydration can reduce muscle strength up to 15%. Dehydration also shrinks muscle cells and leads to protein breakdown. Optimal hydration replenishes electrolytes and reduces exercise-related inflammation.

4. If you're not well hydrated, you're not detoxifying. Even if you're eating organically and following a rigorous cleanse protocol, dehydration means your body can't optimally detoxify. Water flushes waste from your cells, but when you're dehydrated your cells draw water from your blood, stressing your heart and limiting your kidneys from purifying blood. Your liver and other organs also feel the pressure. Toxic buildup leads to constipation, literally forcing your body to cling to the waste it needs to eliminate.



5. Dehydration can raise stress hormones. Some experts believe dehydration is the number-one cause of stress. Even mild dehydration of 1–2% can raise levels of your stress hormone cortisol. Among its jobs, cortisol stores fat around your midsection and breaks down muscle.

6. Dehydration can create fatigue. Too little water crashes your metabolism to a grinding halt, disrupts fluid balance, and decreases blood volume. Your heart struggles to deliver nutrients and oxygen to various tissues. Headaches, mental fog, and lethargy are among the inevitable results. Ironically, fatigue will probably mean you reach for a java pick-me-up, further dehydrating your body.

7. Water can reduce cravings. Thirst can come disguised as hunger, regrettably leading you to those late-afternoon Krispy Kreme donuts your coworker brought in. Before-bed cravings? See if water does the trick: according to a study at the University of Washington, drinking 8 ounces of water at bedtime can shut down your evening hunger pangs.

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YOUR DAILY WATER INTAKE

- 💧 When you get up: 16 ounces
- 💧 30 to 60 minutes before each meal: 16 ounces
- 💧 During a meal: limit to 4 to 8 ounces
- 💧 Start drinking water again 60 minutes after each meal
- 💧 Before bed: 8 ounces

DAILY TOTAL

64 ounces minimum; more if you are in a hot climate, exercise heavily, or are heavier.

Track your water consumption on your daily Journal pages.