



# Healthy Hydration

## Key message

Adults need about 6-8 cups of water or other drinks each day to keep the body working properly.

## How can you tell if you are getting enough fluid?

The body has special mechanisms to make sure you stay hydrated. The easiest way to spot that you might not be getting enough water is if your urine is a dark yellow colour during the day. If you are getting enough water your urine should be a pale straw colour. Feeling thirsty is the body's way of telling you that you are already dehydrated and need to drink more.

## Does it matter which drinks you choose?

All drinks provide water and some also contain essential vitamins and minerals, but some also provide energy (calories). These calories contribute to your daily intake in the same way as those from the foods you eat. Consuming sugar-containing drinks too often can potentially also harm your teeth.

## Water

Drinking water is the best choice because it delivers fluid without adding calories or potential damage to the teeth.

## Tea and coffee

Drinking tea or coffee also delivers water, and even though these drinks can contain caffeine, in moderate amounts (300-400mg or three cups of coffee each day) caffeine doesn't affect hydration.

Pregnant women are advised to limit the amount of caffeine they consume each day to around two cups of coffee or two and a half cups of tea (<200mg caffeine), as pregnancy slows down the rate that caffeine is metabolised. High caffeine levels have been linked to low birth weight babies and reduced fertility in women trying to conceive.

Other hot drinks such as herbal teas, hot chocolate and malted drinks can provide water. If these drinks are sweetened with sugar however it increases their calorie content and their potential damage to teeth.

## Milk

Milk contains lots of essential nutrients such as protein, B vitamins and calcium, as well as being a source of water. However it can also contain saturated fat and so it is recommended that low/reduced-fat options are chosen.

## Fruit juices and smoothies

Fruit juices and smoothies give you water plus some vitamins, minerals and natural plant substances from the fruit. Smoothies may also contain pureed fruit, which adds fibre. These foods can also count towards your 5+ A day. A 150ml glass of fruit juice counts as one portion of fruit, while smoothies that contain at least 150ml of fruit juice and 80g crushed/pulped fruit count as two portions. Fruit juices and smoothies do contain sugar, and therefore calories, and can also be acidic so can damage teeth.

## Soft drinks

Soft drinks are a source of water but, if they contain sugar, this adds to your calorie intake and the potential for damage to your teeth if consumed regularly. Soft drink consumption should be limited.

Adapted from British Nutrition Foundation - healthy hydration guide [www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/hydration/healthy-hydration-guide](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/hydration/healthy-hydration-guide) A poster is also available at: [www.nutrition.org.uk/attachments/427\\_BNF%20Hydration%20Poster\\_PRINT\\_2.pdf](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/attachments/427_BNF%20Hydration%20Poster_PRINT_2.pdf)