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## What's Up with Water

Staying hydrated is promoted as important. But why?

Water is an essential nutrient, supplied from an outside source because the body cannot make enough on its own. Water deprivation kills faster than the lack of any other nutrient.

Water plays an important role in major body functions:

- Water transports nutrients and other essential elements throughout the body. It also transports waste from the body and is essential for regular bowel movements.
- Water protects the brain, eyes, and spinal cord as a protective layer around these and other sensitive structures.
- Water is helpful in the smooth movement of bone joints.
- Drinking water can prevent mental consequences of dehydration, like unclear thinking, mood changes, and fatigue.
- Water regulates the narrow temperature range our body needs to be healthy. Sweating keeps a body cool while water in a body serves as good heat storage material.

Water is a unique nutrient because there is not a specific daily recommendation on intake. Variables such as climate, physical activity, age, state of health, and body size create needs specific to individuals.

According to Tracy Turner and Carol Smathers, Field Specialist, Youth Nutrition and Wellness at OSU Extension and other nutritionists and healthcare experts, the following tips can help increase your water intake:

- Choose water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- As an alternative to fruit juice, add a splash of 100% juice to plain sparkling water for a refreshing, low-calorie drink.
- Carry a water bottle and refill it throughout the day.
- Stock the fridge with bottles or a jug of water rather than sugar-sweetened beverages and juices.
- Serve water with meals.
- Infuse water with flavor by adding fruits such as berries, cucumbers, lemons, and limes.
- Freeze some freezer-safe water bottles for ice-cold water all day long.
- Choose water instead of other beverages when eating out, which is also a money-saver.

Submitted by Marcy DeJonge, Nebraska Extension Assistant, Harlan, and Furnas Counties

Sources: NebGuide "Water: The Nutrient" (G918) at [extensionpublications.unl.edu](http://extensionpublications.unl.edu) and <https://cfaes.osu.edu/news/articles/chow-line-is-drinking-more-water-your-new-year%E2%80%99s-resolution-if-so-here%E2%80%99s-how-do-it> Tracy Turner, OSU Extension.