

# Staying Hydrated this Summer

*By Bill Bradley, Registered Dietitian and Cookbook Author*

Our bodies are made up of about 60% water. We are basically walking, talking, breathing water tanks. If we don't get enough water, our bodies fall apart rather quickly. If we were lost in the woods we could go up to 3 weeks without food, but only 3 days without water. While most of us don't find ourselves in this situation, many don't get enough water on a daily basis. It has been estimated that up to 75% of the population may be suffering from chronic dehydration. Chronic dehydration can lead to many problems including constipation, heart disease, kidney failure, seizure and increased obesity risk. Even mild dehydration can make you irritable and tired, because 80% of our brains are made up of water. Not enough water for the brain and you will get cranky.

There is some controversy about how much water we actually need on a daily basis. Some people need more and some less. The general rule of thumb is eight 8-ounce glasses per day. For most healthy people this will prevent dehydration. If you work out a lot, have a very active job or are a bigger person you may need more. You want a large percentage of what you are drinking every day to be actual water. There are other alternatives, but it is important to be careful of liquids that are sugary or overly caffeinated. Generally, you want to stay away from soda whether diet or sugary as neither is a good substitute for water. You also wouldn't want to substitute only caffeinated coffee or tea as they both can pull water away from your body.

## Here are some suggestions for ways to spritz up your water:

- 1) Add freshly squeezed lemon, lime or orange juice to your water. Many of us add a slice of lemon to our water, but try squeezing half a lemon or lime in a large glass of water. If you want something a little sweeter, try adding the juice of half an orange.
- 2) Try the bubbly – Seltzer water is ok to substitute for water some of the time. This can feel like a more special drink, especially if you add a little juice. When I go out to a restaurant I like to ask for a large seltzer with a splash of cranberry and orange juice.
- 3) Herbal iced tea is great for quenching the thirst especially in the summer. Hot herbal tea is great for the colder months. Add a little honey for sweetener, if desired. I love ginger lemon tea, both iced and hot.
- 4) Eat fruit and vegetables – fruit and vegetables are mostly water. Watermelon, for example, is over 90% water. A plant based diet is very hydrating.

I find it most beneficial if I have water with me all the time. I like to use a glass water bottle as there is still a lot of unknowns when drinking from plastic (whether it is healthy for you or not).

Also, if you are exercising a lot, you may want to use a sports drink afterwards in order to rehydrate yourself while replenishing your electrolytes. Try not to get in the habit of drinking these all the time though as they tend to be high in sugar and/or chemicals.

Making an effort to replenish your body with water will make you feel better in the moment and prevent you from suffering the effects of chronic dehydration.

Stay hydrated!

Here is a [recipe](#) for the lemon ginger tea that I love both in summer and winter. It is not really a “tea”, but an infusion. I hope you give it a try!

