

Drink Up!

SEVEN SURPRISING REASONS TO MAKE WATER YOUR BEVERAGE-OF-CHOICE.

By Linda Melone

NOTHING BEATS A GLASS OF ICE-COLD WATER ON A HOT DAY.

Water isn't just the perfect thirst-quencher, though: It plays a part in a bucket full of crucial physical processes, and can help prevent or ease debilitating everyday physical complaints. Now, fluid of most any kind can help keep you hydrated, but you can't beat plain old water for calorie-free, caffeine-free convenience. But the problem is, most of us don't drink enough of the stuff. Maybe these surprising things water can do for you will get you sipping.

1. Boost fat burning.

In a study from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Va., people who drank two 8-ounce glasses of water before each meal lost about five more pounds than those who did not drink water. "Water provides a feeling of fullness and leads to reduced food intake," says registered dietitian Brenda Davy, the study's lead author. Drinking water also boosts calorie-burning short-term, she says.

2. Recharge your immune system.

Staying hydrated helps your body fight off infection by boosting your immune system. "Water is the major component of lymphatic fluid," says Dr. Christine Gerbstadt, author

of *The Doctor's Detox Diet*. "Lymphatic fluid moves throughout the body, collecting waste and returning it to the bloodstream, removing toxins from your body."

Lymphatic fluid also carries immune cells to where they are needed to fight infections and disease.

3. Prevent skin disorders.

If you're prone to psoriasis or eczema, a lack of water not only further dehydrates the skin but can also compromise the skin's barrier function, increasing your risk of infection, says Dr. Kenneth Beer, dermatologist and owner of ScientificSkin.com. "When your skin is dry, the mucous membrane cracks and allows bacteria to enter," he says.

4. Lift brain fog.

Approximately 78 percent of your brain is water, so it makes sense that a water shortage to your brain can contribute to mental foginess, says Davy. "Even slight dehydration has been shown to impair mental functioning such as solving math problems and reasoning," she says.

5. Banish headaches.

Instead of reaching for the acetaminophen to get rid of your mid-afternoon headache,

drink a glass or two of water first—even if you don't feel thirsty, Davy suggests. "Headaches are often the direct result of

dehydration," she says. Water is also the best cure for a hangover headache.

6. Ease arthritis pain.

Dehydration reduces the lubricating fluid surrounding the cartilage at the end of your bones, causing friction between joint surfaces and resulting in wear-and-tear and pain, Gerbstadt says. Dehydration can also precipitate a bout of gout, caused by uric acid crystals forming in joints.

7. Re-energize.

Your body's cells depend on water to produce energy, says Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, author *From Fatigued to Fantastic!* "Even a slight drop in hydration levels causes an energy drop," Teitelbaum says. Davy notes that the same weight-loss study participants who drank water before meals also exercised more, without being asked to do so. "We think they just had more energy to exercise," she says. ●

*** The National Institute of Medicine recommends that women drink 9 cups of water a day; men should down 13 cups.**

