WATER

HOW 8 GLASSES A DAY KEEP FAT AWAY

Incredible as it may seem, water is quite possibly the single most important catalyst in losing weight and keeping it off. Although most of us take it for granted, water may be the only true "magic potion" for permanent weight loss.

Water suppresses the appetite naturally and helps the body metabolize stored fat. Studies have shown that a decrease in water intake will cause fat deposits to increase, while an increase in water intake can actually reduce fat deposits.

Here's why: The kidneys can't function properly without enough water. When they don't work to capacity, some of their load is dumped onto the liver.

One of the liver's primary functions is to metabolize stored fat into usable energy for the body. But, if the liver has to do some of the kidney's work, it can't operate at full throttle. As a result, it metabolizes less fat, more fat remains stored in the body and weight loss stops.

Drinking enough water is the best treatment for fluid retention. When the body gets less water, it perceives this as a threat to survival and begins to hold on to every drop. Water is stored in extracellular spaces (outside the cells). This shows up as swollen feet, legs and hands.

Diuretics offer a temporary solution at best. They force out stored water along with some essential nutrients. Again, the body perceives a threat and will replace the lost water at the first opportunity. Thus, the condition quickly returns.

The best way to overcome the problem of water retention is to give your body what it needs—plenty of water. Only then will stored water be released.

If you have a constant problem with water retention, excess salt may be to blame. Your body will tolerate sodium only in a certain concentration. The more salt you eat, the more water your system retains to dilute it.

But getting rid of unneeded salt is easy—just drink more water. As it's forced through the kidneys, it takes away excess sodium.

The overweight person needs more water than the thin one. Larger people have larger metabolic loads. Since we know that water is the key to fat metabolism, it follows that the overweight person needs more water.

Water helps to maintain proper muscle tone by giving muscles their natural ability to contract and by preventing dehydration. It also helps to prevent the sagging skin that usually follows weight loss—shrinking cells are buoyed by water, which plumps the skin and leaves it clear, healthy and resilient.

Water helps rid the body of waste. During weight loss, the body has a lot more waste to get rid of—all that metabolized fat must be shed. Again, adequate water helps flush out the waste.

Water can help relieve constipation. When the body gets too little water, it siphons what it needs from internal sources. The colon is one primary source. Result? Constipation. But, when a person drinks enough water, normal bowel function usually returns.

So far, we've discovered some remarkable truths about water and weight loss:

- The body will not function properly without enough water and can't metabolize stored fat efficiently.
- Retained water shows up as excess weight.
- To get rid of excess water you must drink more water.
- Drinking water is essential to weight loss.

How much water is enough? On the average, a person should drink eight 8-ounce glasses every day. That's about 2 quarts. However, the overweight person needs one additional glass for every 25 pounds of excess weight. The amount you drink also should be increased if you exercise briskly or if the weather is hot and dry.

Water should preferably be cold—it's absorbed into the system more quickly than warm water. And some evidence suggests that drinking cold water can actually help burn calories.

To utilize water most efficiently during weight loss, follow this schedule:

When the body gets the water it needs to function optimally, its fluids are perfectly balanced. When this happens, you have reached the "breakthrough point." What does this mean?

- Endocrine-gland function improves.
- Fluid retention is alleviated as stored water is lost.
- More fat is used as fuel because the liver is free to metabolize stored fat.
- Natural thirst returns.
- There is a loss of hunger almost overnight.

If you stop drinking enough water, your body fluids will be thrown out of balance again, and you may experience fluid retention, unexplained weight gain and loss of thirst. To remedy the situation you'll have to go back and force another "breakthrough."

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