

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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How many forms of Water?

Here's summer coming right around the corner. It's feeling plenty warm all ready. And I've been getting questions about water, fluids, how much we should drink, and - unfortunately - hurricane supplies. So, what are the recommendations?

You've probably all heard, maybe even been told by your doctor, to drink at least eight glasses of water a day, right? We were told it had to be water, nothing else really counted. Some 'experts' went so far as to recommend mainly room temperature water. We must have listened, because these days everyone seems to be running around carrying a water bottle, trying to stuff all eight in.

But if you happened to see or read the 2005 Dietary Guidelines when they were published last year, there was no recommendation for water. Nothing was specified, neither what to drink nor how much of it we need. Why?

Several years when doctors started looking at the fluid levels in different groups of people the results were surprising. Those who mostly drank coffee, those who mostly drank sodas, and those who drank water, all had about the same amount of fluid in their bodies. It didn't make much difference how they got their fluids, they all had enough to keep their brains, kidneys, and other organs functioning.

And surprisingly, what we really need is even more than 8 glasses a day. An 'Adequate Intake' for men of all ages is now considered to be about 16 cups a day, and for women about 12 cups a day. BUT not all of it has to be water!

All fruits and vegetables except dried ones contain significant amounts of water.

Fruit juice is mostly water. Meats, seafood and eggs contain water. Milk and yogurt contain water. Some cooked grains contain water too. So the more you eat of these foods, the more water you are getting in your meals.

Consider also that many foods such as gelatin, soups and smoothies are mostly fluid. And of course coffee, tea and sodas are just flavored water (with more or fewer calories in that flavor!) All of these foods contribute to that total amount of water we need. The caffeine in coffee or soda does not force us to lose it all again.

At least one diet book (Volumetrics Weight Control Plan) is based on research showing that the more fluid we get in foods, the faster we feel full, and the fewer calories we eat. But they have to be real foods. Just drinking a bottle of water before you eat is not the same as having a big bowl of soup to start your meal.

Most healthy people will feel thirsty soon enough to be reminded to drink, before they suffer any ill effects from dehydration. Elderly or sick people may need to be encouraged to drink more. Children need to be encouraged to drink water instead of sweetened or flavored beverages.

We only need to deliberately force ourselves to drink more if we are doing heavy exercise and losing a lot of moisture through sweat. Or if after a hurricane or other power outage, we are exposed to higher heat without air conditioning. In those cases forcing down a few extra bottles of water, or tea, coffee or soda, will be a good idea. . Plan on storing at least a gallon of water for each person for 3 days when you make your hurricane stash. Store some flavoring - powdered drink mixes, instant coffee or tea - if you like too.

Most people can check the color of their urine. If it's dark yellow, they need to drink more. And yes, you can 'count' the coffee, tea, soda, juice, soup, gelatin and

other liquids as part of your 8 or 10 or 12 cups of water a day!

Here's a recipe for chai, the flavored tea that's become so popular. Not all chai is spiced. 'Chai' just means tea in some parts of the world. But the popular version is spiced and milky. It has less caffeine than coffee, if you want an alternative morning drink. Just watch out for the calories if you get it with whipped cream and sugar!

Spiced Chai

1 C water

1 C milk (preferably low fat)

1 strip of orange peel

1 - 3" stick of cinnamon

3 whole black peppercorns

3 whole cloves

4 tsp sugar or sweetener

2 tea bags of black (pekoe) tea

Heat milk and water in pan. When warm add spices and tea bags. Simmer until it's as strong as you prefer. Strain out the spices and serve hot or cold. Makes 2 cups.

If you like a stronger tea flavor, you can use another tea bag.

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