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### Drink - When You Are Thirsty!

Those eight glasses of water we were all supposed to drink every day have been in the news a lot recently. First the word was we could only count water. Then we could count any fluid. Then they said we didn't really need eight. Last week the USDA published a new set of Daily Reference Intakes (DRI), including one for water. And since then a new report about how much water people get, and need, has come out.

First the good news - it really makes no difference if you drink water, juice, soup, milk, soda, coffee or tea. Soup, stew, Jello and fruit salads all count too. The only fluids that don't count are alcoholic beverages - sorry!

Now, the confusing parts - the new DRIs are based on the gender and average body size. So, men need more than women. The USDA figures that we get about 20% of the fluid we need from solid foods, such as fruits and vegetables. The other 80% should come from the beverages we drink.

That makes sense, but what is surprising is how much they think we need. For men, the recommendation is 12 ½ cups a day, women need 9 cups! But remember, that is all liquids, not just water. In addition, they say that for most people, if we just drink when we are thirsty, instead of forcing ourselves, we will probably get enough.

Finally, the new National Institutes of Health study found that there it seems that there is a huge range of healthy fluid intake. The elderly were no more likely to be dehydrated than the young. People drinking 5 cups a day were no more likely to be dehydrated than those drinking 30 cups. Only if you're exercising in the heat do you need a lot more. Drink when you exercise, before you get thirsty, don't let yourself get dry. And count all your liquids, not just the water.

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