

Your body and water

Why we need water

The average human body is 50% to 65% water.

Your brain is 85% water, blood is 83% water, muscle is 75% water - even bones are 22% water!

Water is essential to life. For humans, it is the second most important thing after oxygen. You can survive several weeks without food but only a few days without water. So why does your body need water?

Your body needs water to:

- cleanse the blood as it passes through the kidneys
- bathe tissue and cells
- regulate body temperature
- carry oxygen around the body
- carry nutrients to body organs
- help digest food
- prevent a build up of salts
- help remove carbon dioxide and waste products

→ We take in water when eating and drinking.

← We get rid of water when we go to the toilet, we sweat, and when we breathe out.

The kidneys

The kidneys and bladder are part of the excretory system - which is like a sewage system because it gets rid of waste that the body does not need.

Cells produce poisonous waste products that, if allowed to accumulate, would poison your body. This waste is taken by the blood to your kidneys where the blood is filtered.

Your blood passes through the kidneys 300 times a day! About 99% of this fluid goes back into your system, and the rest is sent to your bladder and excreted as urine.

Since they need to process so much fluid, the best way to take care of your kidneys is to drink lots of water - between 1 and 2 litres a day. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink! By the time you get really thirsty, you're already dehydrated. Drinking lots will help prevent kidney diseases and keep your body healthy.

Did you know?

If both your kidneys fail you cannot survive. Fortunately, you only need one, so some people choose to donate a kidney to help others with damaged kidneys.

What sort of water should we drink?

Bottled water is big business. In the UK thirsty consumers get through over 1,000 million litres a year!

There are many types of bottled mineral water available to buy - and yet tests often show that people can't tell the difference between tap water and mineral water!

There is little scientific evidence that mineral water is any better for your health than tap water.

Natural mineral water is extracted from underground and must be tested to ensure it is free of dangerous bacteria and pollution before it is bottled. It is filtered to remove grit but it is not treated.

Tap water undergoes many purification processes to bring it up to standard. The maximum limits of minerals and contaminants allowed are often identical to those for bottled drinking water. Tap water in England is of a very high quality.

How much should we drink?

Doctors agree that adults should drink about 2 litres a day and children about 1 litre of water every day. Whether you drink bottled water or tap water, fizzy water or still water ... it's your choice!

Find out more

The Government's Drinking Water Inspectorate will tell you how they test all water companies to ensure our water is up to standard <http://www.dwi.gov.uk>