

Staying hydrated

In the hot weather it is more important than ever to make sure you are drinking enough. The elderly, young children, people with manual jobs and those exercising are at greatest risk from dehydration in hot weather.

In very warm weather you can lose much more water, in sweat, than you realise and become dehydrated much more quickly than usual.

Being dehydrated can leave you feeling lethargic, constipated, nauseous and can often result in frequent headaches. More seriously it can contribute to heat exhaustion, particularly if you have been exposed to the sun.

A good way of knowing whether you are drinking enough is by the colour of your wee. It should be pale straw coloured, any darker than this and you would benefit from drinking more. In a moderate climate like ours, most of us need around 6 – 8 glasses of fluid per day. But in hot weather this will be higher.

Water is the best fluid to keep you hydrated. You can jazz it up with a slice of lemon or lime, no added sugar squashes or fruit juices. Stay away from too many high-sugar, fizzy drinks as these can lead to an excess energy intake (and weight gain). A frequent intake of sugary drinks is not good for your teeth either!

Drinks like tea, coffee and some fizzy drinks contain caffeine, which is a mild diuretic (it makes you want to urinate) and can cause some further fluid loss. However, drinking caffeinated drinks is better than not drinking at all. If you drink lots of tea and coffee try swapping every other drink for water or no added sugar squash, or try decaffeinated varieties.

If you are doing strenuous exercise a hypotonic sports drink will replace fluid and salt losses more quickly than plain water. You don't need to buy special drinks, just add 100mls fruit juice to 900mls water and add 1/5th tsp (1g) salt. A good guide is to drink 1L of fluid for every hour of strenuous exercise done.

Be guided by the colour of your wee and how often you usually go to the toilet – DON'T WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE THIRSTY – you will already be dehydrated.