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# Can Drinking More Water Help You Lose Weight?

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By Dr. Mercola

If you don't drink enough water, you can easily become dehydrated. Many actually mistake their thirst for hunger, and this is one of the basic premises behind the idea that drinking water may alleviate hunger and help you lose weight. Many studies support this idea though, so it's not just pure hype. Most recently, researchers found that adults who were chronically under-hydrated had higher body mass index (BMI) and were more likely to be obese compared to well-hydrated adults.

A BMI of 25 is considered overweight; 30 obese. Those deemed sufficiently hydrated had an average BMI of 28 whereas inadequately hydrated individuals had an average BMI of 29. While this study does not prove drinking more water will help you lose weight, it does suggest staying well-hydrated is associated with slightly lower body weight.

On the other hand, a 2013 systematic review of 11 studies and two other meta-analyses concluded that while high-quality studies were still lacking, increasing your water consumption when on a diet does appear to be helpful for weight loss. Studies looking at general populations that were not necessarily trying to lose weight found that increasing water consumption yielded inconsistent results.

## How Drinking Water May Aid Weight Loss

So is it all about filling your gut with water to alleviate hunger pangs? As explained by Authority Nutrition, there are actually a number of mechanisms at play. Studies have shown that drinking water may:

- **Reduce your calorie intake.** If you drink more water, you're less likely to drink other beverages such as soda, fruit juices and energy drinks, and this is, I believe, the most significant factor that explains why higher water consumption promotes weight loss. Research suggests replacing other beverages with pure water typically lowers your overall caloric intake by about 9 percent, or 200 calories a day.
- **Reduce your appetite.** Interestingly, this effect has only been shown to hold true in

older subjects. Drinking water before meals had no discernible effect when studied in children.

In a 2010 study, adults who drank 500 milliliters (ml) of water prior to each meal lost an additional 2 kilograms (kg) or 4.4 pounds over three months compared to the non-water group. Another study published in 2015 had very similar outcomes. Adults who drank 500 ml of water 30 minutes before each meal lost 3 pounds more weight over 12 weeks than those who did not preload with water.

Overall, they lost 4.3 kg, or 9 pounds, over the course of the study, which is what you could expect from joining Weight Watchers for 12 weeks.

• **Increase your resting energy expenditure**, meaning you burn more calories. While I doubt drinking water will help you burn any significant amount of calories, some studies do suggest it may give your metabolism a slight boost. For example, adults who drank 500 ml or about 16 ounces of water increased their metabolic rate by 24 and 30 percent respectively in two separate studies. The metabolic rate began to rise within the first 10 minutes, and peaked around 30 to 40 minutes afterward. In a third study, overweight women who drank in excess of 1 liter (L) or 34 ounces of water per day lost an extra 2 kg (4.4 pounds) of weight over the course of a year. Overweight and obese children who drank 7.5 ml of cold water per kg of body weight (averaging 518 ml) also had a 25 percent rise in resting energy expenditure.

## Too Much Water Has Its Own Risks

While most people don't drink enough water for optimal health, too much water also has its risks. You don't want to overdo it. As detailed in a previous paper in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), excessive amounts of water can cause your sodium level to drop to a dangerously low level, causing hyponatremia; a condition in which your cells get waterlogged and swell. While most cells can handle this swelling, your brain cells cannot, and most of the symptoms are caused by brain swelling. Symptoms of hyponatremia include:

✓ Confusion	✓ Decreased consciousness; possible coma	✓ Hallucinations	✓ Convulsions
✓ Fatigue	✓ Headache	✓ Irritability	✓ Loss of appetite
✓ Muscle spasms, cramps or weakness	✓ Nausea	✓ Restlessness	✓ Vomiting

This condition is most common among athletes who rehydrate excessively. Clearly, staying well-hydrated is essential. But it may be unwise to force yourself to drink a certain amount of water just because someone said so. Remember, hydration needs are

highly individual, and using your thirst, the color of your urine and frequency of urination are the best ways to gauge your personal needs on any given day.

## **Replacing Sugary Beverages With Water Is Key for Successful Weight Management**

One of the first pieces of advice I offer to anyone trying to lose weight is to stop drinking soda, fruit juice, sports drinks and any other sugar-laden, high-calorie beverage. This is especially true of drinks containing high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), which has been shown to have the most adverse metabolic consequences, fueling weight gain, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and more.