

## 6 Benefits of Staying Hydrated



Water accounts for 60 percent of your body (or about 11 gallons or 92 pounds in a 155-pound person) and is essential to every cell. So it's not too surprising that new research — reported on at a recent British Psychological Society Annual Conference — found that college students who brought water with them into an exam scored higher marks than their counterparts who didn't have water.

Unfortunately, the researchers didn't look into whether the students actually drank the water. Nor did they investigate the reasons behind the study findings. But the researchers hypothesized that drinking water could improve students' thinking and/or help students stay calm and quell their anxiety — both of which could hinder their test performance.

Their thinking makes sense: Other research has suggested that staying hydrated keeps your memory sharp, your mood stable, and your motivation intact. You can also think through a problem more easily.

Staying hydrated doesn't just impact your brain, though. Here are a few ways water benefits your body's health:

### 1. Water helps prevent dry mouth.

Water keeps your throat and lips moist and prevents your mouth from feeling dry. Dry mouth can cause bad breath and/or an unpleasant taste—and can even promote cavities.

## **2. Water promotes cardiovascular health.**

Dehydration lowers your blood volume, so your heart must work harder to pump the reduced amount of blood and get enough oxygen to your cells, which makes everyday activities like walking up stairs—as well as exercise—more difficult.

## **3. Water keeps your body cool.**

Your body releases heat by expanding blood vessels close to the skin's surface (this is why your face gets red during exercise), resulting in more blood flow and more heat dissipated into the air. When you're dehydrated, however, it takes a higher environmental temperature to trigger blood vessels to widen, so you stay hotter.

## **4. Water helps muscles and joints work better.**

When you're well hydrated, the water inside and outside the cells of contracting muscles provides adequate nutrients and removes waste efficiently so you perform better. Water is also important for lubricating joints. Contrary to popular belief, muscle cramps do not appear to be related to dehydration, but, instead, to muscle fatigue, according to Sam Cheuvront, Ph.D., an exercise physiologist.

## **5. Water keeps skin supple.**

When a person is severely dehydrated, skin is less elastic. This is different than dry skin, which is usually the result of soap, hot water and exposure to dry air. And, no, unfortunately, drinking lots of water won't prevent wrinkles.

## **6. Water helps cleanse your body — inside and out.**

Your kidneys need water to filter waste from the blood and excrete it in urine. Keeping hydrated may also help prevent urinary tract infections and kidney stones. If you are severely dehydrated, your kidneys may stop working, causing toxins to build up in your body.