

Link: <https://parade.com/health/how-to-tell-if-you-arent-drinking-enough-water>

Parade

- [HOME](#)
- [HEALTH & WELLNESS](#)



iStock

The #1 Sign You Aren't Drinking Enough Water—Plus, How To Tell if You're *Overhydrated*

Plus, doctor-approved tips on how to stay properly hydrated.

- [EMILY LAURENCE](#)
- 5 HOURS AGO

There are times when nothing sounds better than gulping down a big glass of water, like after an intense workout or coming inside after spending hours in the sun. But if you only drink water when you're sweating, your body isn't going to function properly. [Staying properly hydrated is immensely important](#)—playing a role in body

temperature control, delivering nutrients to cells, keeping organs functioning and staying mentally sharp. Even when fluid loss is just 1% of body weight, [it will negatively impact brain function and mood](#).

This is exactly why it's important to drink enough water continuously, even before signs of [dehydration](#) start to show. But how can you make sure you're drinking enough? Doctors share the tell-tale signs that you need to up your water intake.

CONTENTS

- [How To Tell You Aren't Drinking Enough Water: The Number One Sign](#)
- [How To Stay Hydrated](#)
- [Sources](#)

How To Tell You Aren't Drinking Enough Water: The Number One Sign

According to integrative medicine doctor and [Cure](#) medical advisor [Dr. Dana Cohen, MD](#), the number one sign you aren't drinking enough water is if it's been more than three hours since you went to the bathroom last and when you do go, your pee is dark yellow. "The best way to measure your hydration levels is super easy: the frequency and color of your pee. You should be getting up to pee every two to three waking hours, and if you're not, you're probably dehydrated," she says.

Dr. Cohen says that urine that's pale yellow is a good indicator that you're drinking enough. If it's dark yellow, orange or brown, that means you're not drinking enough. If your urine is clear, she says that's a sign that you're actually *overhydrated*, drinking more water than you need.

The one caveat to this, she says, is if you've eaten foods linked to discoloring urine, such as [asparagus](#) or beets. If you have, there's another easy way to know you aren't drinking enough water: if you're thirsty. "The most common sign of inadequate hydration is feeling thirsty. If you consistently feel thirsty, it's an indication that your body needs more fluids," says [Dr. Patrick Carter, DO](#), a board-certified [family](#) practitioner and the medical advisor for [Prime IV Hydration & Wellness](#). However, he adds that there are other reasons someone may feel thirsty unrelated to hydration, including having certain medical conditions (like [diabetes or sickle cell anemia](#)).

Both doctors say that if you feel dizzy, fatigued, have a headache, or are experiencing muscle cramps and weakness, these are all signs of dehydration. Dr. Cohen says that signs of extreme hydration include anuria (no urine output), dizziness rendering the person unable to stand or walk normally, low blood pressure, fast heart rate, fever, lethargy, confusion and can lead to seizures, shock or coma. “These symptoms require immediate medical attention,” she says.

How To Stay Hydrated

Both doctors say hydration needs vary from person to person, but Dr. Carter says a good general guideline to follow is aiming to drink eight eight-ounce glasses of water a day. However, he adds that it’s important to take into account your individual needs, such as how active of a lifestyle you lead. “It’s always a good idea to consult with a healthcare professional to determine the appropriate amount of water for your specific needs,” Dr. Carter says.

When it comes to staying hydrated, both doctors say that while drinking water is important, drinking other liquids can help you meet your hydration goals. This includes herbal tea, unsweetened fruit juices, milk and electrolyte drinks. “I also recommend a green smoothie with chia seeds, as the fiber in the green smoothie acts like a sponge and holds onto hydration longer, while the minerals help move fluids into the center of your body more efficiently than plain bulk water,” Dr. Cohen explains. She adds that chia seeds hold up to 30 times their weight in water, which allows fluids and electrolytes to be held in the body longer.

If you struggle with remembering to drink enough water, Dr. Carter recommends setting reminders using your phone or an app like [Waterllama](#), [My Water](#), or [Aqualert](#). He also recommends carrying a reusable water bottle with you wherever you go, which serves as both a visual reminder and a way to meet your hydration needs.

Remember: It’s important to hydrate before you notice any symptoms of dehydration. Be mindful of your intake throughout the day and use your urine color and frequency as a hydration monitor. That way, you can function at your absolute best.

Sources

- [Dr. Dana Cohen, MD](#), integrative medicine doctor and [Cure](#) medical advisor

- [Dr. Patrick Carter, DO](#), a board-certified family practitioner and the medical advisor for [Prime IV Hydration & Wellness](#)