

The Health Benefits of Staying Hydrated

THE ISSUE: Water is the quiet hero keeping our bodies functioning at their best—from the moment we wake up to the time we go to bed—regulating our temperature, transporting nutrients, flushing out toxins, and so much more. For our children, who are growing and learning every day, staying hydrated is even more critical.

- It supports their physical development;
- Boosts their cognitive functions; and
- Helps them stay focused and energized.

Drinking more water, instead of other sugary or caffeinated drinks, is a simple, powerful way to stay healthy and full of energy every day.

THE CONCERNS:

Many Americans currently drink less water than is recommended.

- A [study from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) found that more than half of children and adolescents in the U.S. are not adequately hydrated, which can impair their physical performance and cognitive abilities.
- Even mild dehydration in adults can [trigger fatigue and headaches, cloud focus, and strain the heart and kidneys](#), quietly harming health.

While Americans are drinking too little water, they are consuming too many sugary drinks. According to the CDC, U.S. children and

adolescents drink an average of just 23 ounces of plain water daily, far below recommended levels. At the same time, on average, children drink more than 10 ounces of sugary drinks each day, which adds up to about 30 gallons of sugary drinks per year. These averages disguise, however, that some children rely on sugary drinks instead of water.

This not only contributes to poor hydration but also increases the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and dental problems, making it a pressing public health concern.

Too many parents think juices and energy drinks are healthy when they're really just brilliantly marketed calorie bombs. Similarly, many parents prioritize milk or juice over water, often because they believe these drinks offer more nutritional value. This well-intentioned choice can backfire, as children miss out on developing a taste for water and instead become accustomed to sugary alternatives.

- An estimated **61% of U.S. children and youth** consume sugary drinks each day.
- Over time, this makes it harder to establish good hydration habits.

Here's the good news: Shifting to water as the default drink is a simple change that can have a big impact on your family's health.

THE RISKS:

The consequences of inadequate hydration and excessive sugary drink consumption are far-reaching.

- Dehydration can lead to immediate symptoms like **fatigue, headaches, and difficulty concentrating and learning**, affecting both adults and children in their daily activities.
- For adults, chronic dehydration may also contribute to more serious conditions, **such as kidney stones and urinary tract infections**.

- Ongoing inadequate hydration is also linked to increased risks of chronic diseases like [diabetes and heart failure](#).

Sugary drinks pack a double punch: They provide empty calories that lead to weight gain and increase the risk of chronic diseases.

- The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) reports that children consuming sugary drinks are at higher risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and fatty liver disease.
- Drinking one soda a day equals [55 pounds of sugar per year](#).
- Additionally, the high sugar and acidity in these drinks contribute to [tooth decay](#), a common issue in children.

SOLUTIONS:

Getting your family to drink more water is totally doable and can even feel like a win for everyone. Here are some practical tips to make water the go-to drink for your family:

- **Keep water accessible:** Encourage everyone in your family to carry a reusable water bottle.
- **Make it appealing:** Add natural flavors like lemon, cucumber, watermelon, or berries to water for a refreshing taste without sugar.
- **Lead by example:** Parents should drink water regularly, as children often mimic adult behaviors.
- **Educate on benefits:** Explain to children why water is important for their energy and focus, in simple terms they can understand.
- **Limit access to sugary drinks:** Reduce the availability of sodas, juices, and energy drinks at home, making water the easiest choice.
- **Incorporate into routines:** Encourage drinking water with meals, after physical activities, and before bed to build consistent habits that will last for a lifetime.
- **Start early:** Introduce water to children from a young age to help them develop a taste for it. Parents should offer water as the first choice for quenching thirst, alongside breast milk or

formula for infants, and as a primary beverage for older children.

- **Use fun tools:** Try colorful straws, ice cubes in fun shapes, or smart bottles that track intake to make keeping hydrated fun.

By integrating these habits into daily life, you can help your family enjoy the benefits of staying hydrated while avoiding the pitfalls of sugary drinks. This simple shift can have a profound impact on health, from better school performance for children to reduced disease risk for adults.

SOURCES:

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