

## What's the Big Sweat About Dehydration?

Have you ever spent a warm Sunday afternoon playing basketball or baseball? Chances are, you were thirsty by the end of the game, maybe even thirsty enough to guzzle an entire pitcher of water. That thirst you had was a sign of **dehydration** (say: dee-hi-**dray**-shun). Dehydration means that your body loses more fluids (like [sweat](#) or urine) than it takes in.

Our bodies need [water](#) to work properly. We lose water and some [minerals](#) (like salt) from our bodies every day in many ways - through sweating, going to the bathroom, and even through breathing. We usually replace the water we lose through drinking and through the food we eat. But if we lose too much water at once, it can be dangerous.

Could you be dehydrated? Get yourself a glass of water and keep reading to find out!

### Why Am I Dehydrated?

Dehydration happens for many different reasons. If you're not drinking enough each day, you might be very thirsty. This is one way your body tells you that it needs more fluids.

Another way to tell that you might be dehydrated is if you feel very tired, even if you're not playing hard and you've been getting enough sleep.

Or you might not be going to the bathroom a lot - maybe only once or twice a day instead of five or six times. That could be another signal that your body needs more water.

You might get dehydrated because you have a virus (say: **vye**-rus) that makes you vomit, or because you have diarrhea (say: **die**-ah-**ree**-ah). This can cause dehydration because your body isn't able to hold onto the water from the things you drink and eat.

Or you might get a [cold](#) or the [flu](#). Even if you don't throw up, you might not feel like eating or drinking. And you probably won't have to go to the bathroom very much either. That's why your mom, dad, or doctor will tell you to "drink lots of fluids" when you're sick. They want to make sure you don't get dehydrated.

Another reason you might get dehydrated is because you have been sweating a lot, especially when you play outside in [hot weather](#). Most kids need about twice as much fluid as they usually drink when they're playing sports or [exercising](#). But if you're busy playing, you may forget to stop and take a drink, or to rest and cool down for a while.

Getting too hot can make you dizzy, weak, or nauseated (say: **naw**-zee-**ate**-ed), which means that you'll feel like you have to throw up. This is called **heat illness**, and it can happen when you're dehydrated.

## What Should I Do?

The best thing to do when you're dehydrated is to replace the fluids your body has lost. When you're sick, your mom or dad might give you lots to drink to help you do this. Water, Gatorade (and other sports drinks), juices, and even special ice pops can all help your body get the water it needs.

When it's hot outside, and especially when you're exercising, you need to replace the fluids you're losing through sweating. If you get really hot and feel weak or if you can't stand up, get dizzy, or want to throw up, tell an adult and go somewhere cool and rest while you drink.

## Do I Need to See a Doctor?

Even if you're thirsty and you do drink while you're sick, you might still keep throwing up. Then your mom or dad might need to take you to your doctor or to the hospital. The doctor will examine you to see why this is happening and to see if you're dehydrated.

The doctor or nurse may set up something called an IV, or intravenous (say: **in**-trah-**vee**-nus), line. This is a special tube (like a very thin straw) that goes right into your veins, so the liquid goes right to where your body needs it most. Soon, you will start to feel much better.

If your skin is dry and red, your heart is beating way too fast (like you just ran a race), or you feel confused or really tired, then you need to tell an adult right away. Your mom or dad will need to take you to a doctor or hospital right away.

## Thirst-quenching Tips

Whether you're exercising in the sun or keeping it cool by reading on the couch, here's what every kid should know about water:

- Drink water, juice, or sports drinks often when you're playing. Carry a water bottle with you on your bike or in your backpack.
- Drink eight glasses of water each day.
- If drinking eight glasses sounds like too much water, try getting some of your water supply from foods like grapes, watermelon, oranges, cantaloupe, lettuce, cucumbers, and celery.
- Drink before you go out to play or exercise.
- Drink even when you're not very thirsty.
- Stay away from drinks that have [caffeine](#) (like iced tea or soda) when you're exercising - they can actually make you lose more fluids.
- Take plenty of breaks to rest in the shade or in air conditioning. You could also take a bath to cool off, but you still need to remember to drink water.

When you're sick:

- Drink small sips of liquids, even if you really don't feel much like it. If you're not throwing up, ask your mom or dad to make you gelatin or popsicles with your favorite fruit juice.
- Don't drink too fast - this can upset your stomach. Take small sips or even use a spoon to drink just a little bit at a time.
- If you've been throwing up or have diarrhea, be sure to tell a parent. You might have

a virus like the flu. Your mom or dad will know when to call the doctor.

The most important thing you can do to prevent dehydration is to pay attention to your body. If you feel really dizzy, weak, or thirsty or if you haven't gone to the bathroom in the last 12 hours, tell an adult right away.

Now that you know all about dehydration, how about getting yourself a refill on that glass of water?

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