

"I've heard that I should drink eight glasses of water a day. Does that include other drinks as well or does it have to be just water?"

Sarah, Whakatane.

Siobhan says... drink regularly throughout the day to avoid dehydration.

As a general rule, adults need about six to eight glasses of fluid per day, but this doesn't necessarily have to be just water. You can include diluted fruit juices, fresh fruit juice, milk, fruit and herb teas as well as tea and coffee in moderation. The best advice is to drink regularly through the day with meals and between meals. If we don't drink enough throughout the day we become dehydrated. Typical symptoms include headaches, tiredness, constipation and nausea. Remember that during the summer months we can become dehydrated more quickly so it's even more important to drink regularly throughout the day.

There has been a lot of debate as to whether tea and coffee should be included in our daily fluid intake. For some people avoiding tea and coffee will mean an overall reduction in daily fluid intake and recent studies suggest that normal tea and coffee drinking in moderation (four or five cups a day) is not harmful. However, water is a good choice because it replaces fluid without adding unwanted calories. You don't have to buy expensive bottled water. You can re-use a water bottle and fill it up with cooled drinking water from the tap.

Fruit juices, although good sources of vitamin C, if taken in large quantities can add unwanted calories. Having one glass of fruit juice per day satisfies our daily vitamin C needs and even helps to absorb iron from our food. Milk is a good source of minerals such as calcium. If you have a glass of milk every day, by switching from full fat dark-blue top milk to trim green top will cut out 2800g fat over a year – equivalent to nearly six packs of butter!

Avoiding fizzy drinks will help children develop good habits and along with regular tooth brushing will help avoid tooth decay. Fizzy drinks should be kept as an occasional treat and not be a regular feature in the shopping basket.