

Healthy Drinking

A healthy balanced diet and good hydration

Healthy drinking, including managing alcohol intake is part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Alcohol has been identified as a risk factor in musculoskeletal health as excess use of alcohol increases the chance of injury and because excess use of time causes changes to your body.

A healthy balanced diet and good hydration is also important for the promotion of general good physical and mental health. Individuals struggling with sticking to positive changes in their lifestyle such as exercise recommendations and/or rehabilitation often benefit from even small improvements in the quality of their dietary intake and when they are properly hydrated.

Dehydration

It is essential that you drink enough to keep your body in good working order. After all, between 50-75% of the adult human body is water! The specific number is dependent on your age, weight and sex. Water is essential for health and is necessary for a number of function in the body:

- Function of the cells in the body
- Removal of waste
- Regulation of your temperature

Dehydration is where your body loses more fluids that it is taking in.

In some circumstances such as if you are unwell with vomiting/diarrhoea, have been in the sun too long, sweated too much after exercise, have drunk too much alcohol or if you have specific medical conditions, you are at a greater risk of becoming dehydrated.

The brain and kidneys have the highest levels of water in your body. If you become dehydrated, it can cause problems with feelings of confusion, dizziness and tiredness. You have a greater risk of developing problems with your muscles and tendons if you are dehydrated. This can show as developing cramps or muscle strains.

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The British Dietetic Association have a helpful fact sheet about fluids (water and drinks) if you would like to find out more.

Alcohol

Alcohol is a risk factor in developing bone, muscle and joint pain. There are a number of ways alcohol can affect the body:

- Alcohol can cause us to injure ourselves through falling over
- Research has shown that alcohol can increase the levels of specific hormones in the body that slow down bone formation and draws the calcium out of the bones. This delays bone development and fracture healing. Long term, this can contribute to osteoporosis or other brittle bone conditions. Alcohol can also reduce the recovery and growth of muscle tissue
- Alcohol can make exercise and activity feel harder than it should by affecting your blood pressure and heart rate
- High and/or regular alcohol intake makes it more difficult to make other choices that have a positive impact on your bone, muscle and joint health such as losing weight or committing to regular exercise

If you regularly drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread your drinking evenly over 3 or more days. If you have one or two heavy drinking episodes a week, you increase your risks of death from long term illness and from accidents and injuries.

The risk of developing a range of health problems increases the more you drink on a regular basis.

If you wish to cut down the amount you drink, a good way to help achieve this is to have several drink-free days each week.

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