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## What is hydrogen water? All about this trendy beverage with a devoted fanbase

Is regular water not good enough anymore? Trendy Hydrogen water claims more benefits than plain old H<sub>2</sub>O.

Feb. 25, 2020, 6:01 PM EST / Source: TODAY

By **Michelle Gant**

Whether it's bottled, canned, pouched or boxed, water is still just water ... right? Browse the beverage section of any supermarket these days and you'll likely be bombarded with a lot of options all promising to provide drinkers with ultimate levels of hydration. With sparkling, alkaline and electrolyte-infused options taking up more and more shelf real estate, sometimes it may seem like plain H<sub>2</sub>O is a relic.

One of the newest additions to this ever-growing list of cool liquids is hydrogen water. It first hit U.S. markets about four years ago, but today, more companies are jumping on the bandwagon to develop their own versions of this supposedly souped-up water.

But what exactly is hydrogen water and how is it made?



A 30-pack case of Dr. Perricone Hydrogen Water retails for \$90. [Dr. Perricone Hydrogen Water](#)

Plain tap water already contains hydrogen, but hydrogen water has additional hydrogen gas dissolved into it. It does not alter the pH or change the structure of the water molecule, said Tyler W. LeBaron, the founder and director of the Molecular Hydrogen Institute, a nonprofit that works with universities and other research institutions to study hydrogen.

Hydrogen water is made by bubbling pure hydrogen gas into water, or by using electrolysis, which “decomposes the water molecule to hydrogen gas and oxygen gas,” LeBaron told TODAY.

Since molecular hydrogen is an odorless, tasteless gas, hydrogen water doesn't taste any different than regular water.

Beverage companies claim that by adding additional hydrogen molecules to their products, the drinker will be able to reap certain benefits, such as gain more energy, reduce inflammation and even slow the aging process.

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Hydrogen water has been popular for several years in Japan. According to [BevNet](#), ready-to-drink products and at-home hydrogen water machines have been available in the country for years.

One of the first brands of hydrogen water to show up in the U.S. was HFactor, which hit the market in 2017. It comes in a pouch with a twist top and was included in the Academy Award swag bags given to all the nominees this year. Other hydrogen water brands, like Dr. Perricone's, HTwo, HyVIDA, are packaged in unique ways, which is a necessity because of the nature of hydrogen.

“Since hydrogen is the smallest molecule in the universe, it will easily escape through plastic containers. However, (the) use of aluminum packages, such as pouches or cans, can successfully be used to store hydrogen-rich water,” LeBaron said.

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Unlike regular water, however, the supposed benefits of hydrogen water may quickly fizzle out. LeBaron said you'll want to consume it quickly, preferably within 15 to 30 minutes of opening a pouch or can, to ingest the maximum amount of hydrogen. "Since hydrogen is a gas, just like carbonated water with carbon dioxide gas, it will readily dissipate out of the water," he said. "The more shaking and stirring, the faster the gas will leave."

While marketing materials for most of these brands promise consumers that hydrogen water will help ease muscle fatigue, reduce inflammation, speed up workout recovery and even provide antioxidants to fight free radicals, the real science behind any of those claims is inconclusive.

Several studies have appeared in the journal [Medical Gas Research](#), but many of them were conducted on animals, not humans, in a controlled lab setting. The studies that have been done with humans have been fairly small in scale.

One [study](#) conducted by a team of Japanese researchers in 2017 looked at how hydrogen-rich water might be used to help improve mood, anxiety and autonomic nerve function in daily life by exploring its effects on 26 volunteers over a month-long period. The data found no negative side effects among participants.

The study concluded, "HRW [Hydrogen rich water] administration for 4 weeks in adult volunteers improved mood, anxiety, and autonomic nerve function, suggesting that HRW administration may offer an effective method to reinforce QOL [quality of life] and maintain good health."

While some of the studies sound promising and no ill effects from the consumption of hydrogen water have been reported, many researchers and nutritionists agree that there is a need for further testing on a larger scale to gather more conclusive results.

"These studies haven't been replicated in large groups of average people," Frances Largeman-Roth, RDN, nutrition expert and author, told TODAY. "Hydrogen does act as an antioxidant, but adding it to water doesn't mean it will provide an antioxidant effect in the body."

Plus, if you want to reap the supposed benefits of hydrogen water, you'll have to pay up. HFactor costs \$14.99 for a six-pack of 11-ounce pouches; Dr. Perricone's water, which comes in 8.3-ounce cans, costs \$12 for a four-pack. HyVida costs \$24.99 for a 12-pack of 12-ounce cans.

"Hydrogen water is expensive, too," Largeman-Roth added. "I'd recommend sticking to your regular tap water, which means more money in your pocket to buy the stuff with real research behind it – fruits and veggies."

Bonnie Taub-Dix, RDN, creator of [BetterThanDieting.com](#), and author of "Read It Before You Eat It - Taking You from Label to Table," said it's not the type of water that matters so much as the quantity of water you're consuming.

"What might be most important issue here is that so many of us are not drinking enough water in general, so any type of water that you'll actually drink might be better than too little water," she said. "Many people walk around feeling listless, irritable and headachy without realizing that they might just be dehydrated."

She added that if you're going to consume a trendy water, always check a product's label first, as some brands add sugar, artificial flavorings, caffeine or even more vitamins and minerals than you should be consuming on a daily basis.

"Like other trendy foods or beverages, as long as the product is safe to consume without side effects and you're willing to spend extra money, hydrogen water could be a way to stay healthfully hydrated," said Taub-Dix. "So, basically, if you're not drinking enough water and you feel better after drinking hydrogen water – even if it's the placebo effect – then go for it. But you have to weigh the benefits against the weight it has on your wallet, as well."

Michelle Gant



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