

THINK WHILE YOU DRINK

It's pretty easy to turn on a tap and go through water like...well, like it was water. But grab a glass, fill it with the clear stuff, and take a moment to toast one of nature's more remarkable molecules: H₂O.

For one thing, it's versatile stuff. Water is the only substance on Earth that is available naturally in solid, liquid, and gaseous form. It's also considered "the universal solvent," its subtle polar charges enabling it to dissolve more substances than acids do. What's more, water dissolves with finesse—unlike acids, which change the chemistry of their solutes, water leaves dissolved molecules the same as they started (though substantially wetter).

Special delivery. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in spite of an infrastructure with a replacement cost of \$175 billion, the average American pays just 25 cents for a day's worth of water.

Most of that 50 to 80 gallons flows through the bathroom, though heating systems use plenty. Humans require at least 2.5 quarts of water daily to maintain a healthy body, which is itself about 66% water. The brain is just a tad soggier, at 70% water. Think of that while you drink to our most precious resource. ■