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WATER, WELLNESS AND YOU

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3



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Hydration for Health

Water is the biggest part of what we are, quite literally. Our bodies are comprised of more than 60% water. Despite this, one of the most widespread and frequent ailments affecting people worldwide is dehydration.

At some point we all experience dehydration, but fail to realize the dangers it poses, or the preventative measures we should be taking to ensure that we remain healthy, and hydrated. Because dehydration symptoms, such as thirst, only announce themselves once we have become dehydrated, we have grown accustomed to initial stages, and tend to alleviate the discomfort of dehydration, rather than preventing it in the first place.

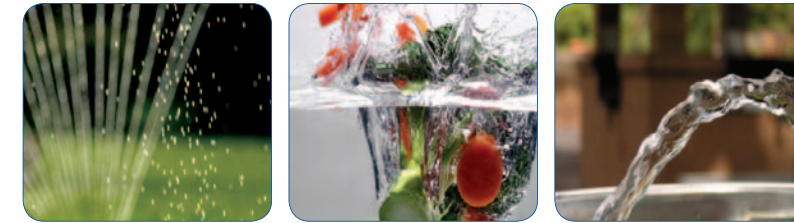
Scientists generally mark dehydration as the loss of 1% body water, and mark fatal stages between 9-12%. We do not realize what the symptoms of dehydration really are, and in turn, fail to adequately assess the damages and consequences of dehydration to our bodies and general health.

Many experts maintain that we, as a society, are chronically dehydrated. They point to the fact that many individuals rely on colas or coffee to provide much needed water. The jury is still out regarding the net effects of water loss due to the diuretic and dehydrating properties of the caffeine and sugar present in these beverages. What is known, however, is that pure water is required at the cellular level to maintain almost all of our bodily functions.

At the most basic levels, our bodies need water. Claudia C. Collins, PhD at the University of Nevada states that "every body cell, tissue, organ and nearly every life-sustaining body process requires water." Body temperature relies on a well hydrated body, with water acting as our insulator in cold environments, and our cooling mechanism when we perspire. Hydration allows us to freely move our joints, and acts as a protective cushion for tissues and organs.

Purified water has the added benefit of helping to detoxify our bodies by transporting cellular waste to our kidneys. In cases of severe or chronic dehydration, minerals can begin to crystallize within our kidneys, causing stones. These stones are actually comprised of a "honeycomb" of crystals that provide an ideal breeding ground for bacteria. This can often result in infection or illness. Many experts maintain that many "modern" ailments are in fact a result of chronic dehydration.

A well hydrated body also ensures that our eyes are lubricated, our skin is clear and taut, and that mucous membranes, like those in the nasal cavity, remain an effective barrier against



common illnesses like colds and flu. In each of these processes, the water in our bodies is used, and depletes, meaning we must replenish our internal supply of water regularly.

Initial stages of dehydration go undetected, with no outward or noticeable physical symptoms alerting us. What we think of as initial signs of dehydration (thirst, dry mouth, decrease in urination, and headaches), are actually signals that the hydration level in our bodies has dropped by as much as 1-2%.

While the figure seems minimal, experts note, "with as little as 2% water loss due to sweating, a drop in blood volume can occur." This negatively affects our bodies' ability to move and absorb oxygen and nutrients as they travel throughout our system. As dehydration increases, we begin to see its more pronounced physical effects, like nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Some of the most common causes of dehydration include cold and flu, extensive exercise with improper fluid intake, blood loss, fever, and environmental or temperature changes.

It is important to drink pure water to maintain an adequate level of hydration. Pure water is quickly absorbed. When water is introduced into the body as part of a solution, it remains in the stomach until the solute can be digested. Often, digestion uses more water than was consumed. Beverages that contain caffeine or sugar also have additional dehydrating side effects.

In a recent study, Dr. Janet Mentis, assistant professor at the University of California Los Angeles School of Nursing insists that "maintaining adequate fluid balance is an essential component of health at every stage of life." Bodily hydration is particularly important for children, elderly persons, and athletes, who are particularly susceptible to the more advanced stages of dehydration. In these groups, dehydration can come on more rapidly than expected or noticed with a higher potential for serious consequences.

Because of their small stature, lesser body weight, and relative energy consumption while playing, children experience dehydration much more rapidly than adults. Moreover, children are less likely to announce the symptoms of dehydration,

meaning they can easily become severely dehydrated, very quickly. Children should be offered drinks regularly, and should also be watched for signs of dehydration such as darkly coloured or strong smelling urine, irritable behaviour on hot days, and sunken or dark rings around the eyes.

Dehydration is one of the most common reasons for hospitalization of people over the age of 60. As we age, our internal sensors for thirst become less reliable, making it easier for elderly persons to only realize they are dehydrated when they experience symptoms of further advanced dehydration.

Mentes advises that, "potential consequences of dehydration include constipation, falls, medication toxicity, urinary tract and respiratory infections, delirium, renal failure, seizure, electrolyte imbalance, hyperthermia, and longer time to wound healing (especially pressure ulcers)." It is imperative that seniors are aware of their body's tendency to use fluids inefficiently, and

their inability to feel the signs of dehydration. A senior who has become severely dehydrated puts themselves at risk of long term consequences, and complications resulting from dehydration.

During intense physical activity, body fluids are lost at an accelerated rate. Athletes should ensure that they are consuming plenty of fluids at least 2 hours prior to physical activity, and maintaining a steady intake of fluid throughout their workout. Failure to properly hydrate will deflate the results of an athlete's hard work. With research suggesting that "dehydrating muscle by as little as 3% can result in a 12% decrease in strength," and will bring about fatigue more rapidly. It can also result in increased tearing or straining of muscles, which are made of up to 75% water. Athletes should consume a minimum of one bottle of water for every 45 minutes of activity. Most people suffer from chronic dehydration.

In fact, "you actually lose significant fluid just sitting in an air conditioned car or office." Adequate hydration levels can be maintained by managing our intake of water. It is far easier to prevent dehydration than to rehydrate, once advanced stages are reached. Experts suggest making simple proactive alterations to your day to day patterns. Eating plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, and drinking lots of clean and pure water prior to thirst, are your body's best defenses.

Changes in your day to day lifestyle can include starting your morning with a large glass of purified water, keeping a sports bottle close by during the work day, and pairing coffee breaks with a glass of water, to keep yourself healthy and hydrated. Keeping pure, clean water within an arms reach at all times can help to promote a steadier intake of water, and in turn, a healthier body, lifestyle, and appearance.

WATER TONICS

Strawberries Preserve

For most Canadians, one of the first heralds of summer is the arrival of fresh strawberries from a local farm. Their delicate aroma speaks of their heritage. Strawberries and roses are from the same family. It is no wonder that we associate them with love.

We now know that strawberries, while delicious, are also high in antioxidants, vitamin C, and iron. In short, they are very good for you. In fact, even without the benefit of science, generations of peoples have prized the strawberry nearly as highly for its medicinal value as for its flavour.

Aboriginal races have used the fruit, leaves and runners to combat a host of illnesses from common colds to cholera. It seems that the berry has an antibacterial quality that has been used for centuries to heal wounds and clear complexions.

Strawberries are also rich in fibre, which lowers cholesterol, potassium, which aids digestion, folic acid, which wards off heart disease, and vitamin B6, which helps to maintain a healthy immune system.

The following recipe helps to stimulate the appetite, cool the body and tonify the liver. Remember to try to find organic berries and to use only pure water in its preparation. A tonic is only as good for you as the ingredients that go into it.

1/2 cup honey
5 cups apple cider vinegar
3 cups fresh strawberries

Heat honey in vinegar until well dissolved. Remove from heat and let cool. Place in a large crock or glass jar. Add fresh strawberries, making sure that they are totally submerged. Cover the container and allow the berries to infuse in a cool dark place for 5 - 7 days. Strain the tonic and refrigerate.

TO USE: Add 2 spoonfuls of tonic to 1 cup of pure water. Mix well, drink and enjoy.

YOUR BODY OF WATER

Want to Lose Weight? Don't Lose Water.

At first glance, water doesn't seem to contribute much to your health. After all, it has no vitamins. No fibre. No protein. No carbohydrates. So why is pure water so integral to weight-loss?

Many people on extreme diets have the illusion that they have lost five to ten pounds in just a few days. In fact, they have lost no fat at all, only water, and have put themselves in a state of dehydration. This will cause them to immediately regain the weight as soon as they return to their normal diet.

Other people avoid drinking water when they are trying to lose weight, for fear that they will put on 'water weight'. This, too, can induce a state of dehydration that will prevent the body from metabolizing fat efficiently.

A state of chronic dehydration will cause the body to hang on to everything that it eats or drinks. The only way to make the body feel safe and start metabolizing fat again is to supply it with regular amounts of pure of water.

"Many people notice a reduction in weight and centimeters, as their body's water stores become redundant and so decrease." Says Kim Beardsmore, a successful weight loss coach "If your diet has been one that did not provide you with adequate water, your body will have developed a pattern of storing water. It's part of the body's in-built survival mechanism, to store up the essential nutrients in short supply, just in case they aren't available in the future. So if you don't drink enough water, you are 'conditioning' your body to store water. And water is bulk and unwanted centimeters."

"A lot of us are walking around mildly dehydrated," says Barbara Levine, Ph.D., R.D., codirector of human nutrition at Rockefeller University in New York City. In fact, according to a recent Rockefeller University survey of 2,818 North Americans, only 34 percent drank the recommended amount of water daily.

"Water is needed for every cell in your body," says Levine. That is because the chemical reactions that happen in your body need a watery environment. Among its many tasks, water helps your body maintain its optimal temperature. It also helps your body digest food, convert it to energy, get rid of waste and avoid constipation. It is these functions of cleansing our systems and of providing an optimum environment for our natural chemical processes that makes consuming pure water so vital.

Susan M. Kleiner, Ph.D., R.D., FACN, an affiliate professor of the Nutritional Sciences Program at the University of Washington in Seattle as well as author of Power Eating and High-Performance Nutrition, blames common ailments on inadequate hydration. "Our thirst mechanisms aren't usually a good indicator of when we need water. When you become thirsty, chances are you are already mildly dehydrated." Dr. Kleiner explains.

Even mild dehydration can have the negative effect of slowing the body's metabolism as much as three percent. Dehydration is often mistaken for hunger. One glass of water will shut down midnight hunger pangs for nearly 100 percent of dieters, according to a University of Washington study.

Although these hunger-pangs can be satisfied with beverages other than water, it should be remembered that most beverages also contain unwanted and unnecessary calories. Also many beverages, especially those that contain both caffeine and sugar, do not even supply hydration but have the opposite effect of causing the body to lose what it really needs, water.

So in these summer months, when our need for water increases with the temperature, remember to keep hydrated with the purest water available.



ALTERNATIVE HEALTH FILE

Linus Carl Pauling

Widely regarded as the premier chemist of the 20th Century, Linus Carl Pauling was a quantum chemist and biochemist. A two-time winner of the Nobel Prize, he was also the grandfather of the discipline of orthomolecular medicine.

Orthomolecular medicine, or optimum nutrition, "describes the practice of preventing and treating disease by providing the body with optimal amounts of substances which are natural to the body." Its general tenants maintain that diet and nutrition are the leading contributors to preserving the health of any individual. It further stresses the need to optimize naturally occurring organic molecules, such as vitamins, minerals, enzymes, antioxidants, amino acids, essential fatty acids, and dietary fibre. Furthermore, because water is necessary for the digestion and absorption of food, supplying oxygen and nutrients to the cells and ridding the body of wastes, it is a very important element in the organic chemistry of all biological systems.

Linus Pauling began his career studying the atom and ended it having helped to codify the emerging science of molecular biology. In 1949, his hypothesis and subsequent proof regarding the nature of sickle cell anemia as caused by abnormalities in the hemoglobin molecule heralded the era of molecular medicine. Often molecular diseases arise from abnormalities in the amounts or the structure of enzymes. Based on these discoveries, it was a natural progression to then develop a theory that explained the molecular basis of vitamin therapy.

Pauling defined orthomolecular medicine as "the preservation of good health and the treatment of disease by varying the concentration in the human body of substances that are normally present in the body". For him, maintaining health was a matter ensuring that an individual ingests the right molecules in the right concentration. These include the nutrients we consume in our diets, the vitamins that we use to supplement, the herbs that we ingest to cure and the quality of water that we drink, which is both courier and catalyst for the complex reactions that occur within our bodies at the molecular level.

By adhering to his own code of optimum nutrition, Linus Carl Pauling lived productively for 93 years.