

Water: Who Needs It?

Water is one of the most important elements in the human body. Human beings cannot live after three days without water. It is estimated that 80% of Americans are dehydrated not from a lack of fluid but from an over-consumption of sugary and caffeinated drinks. Our bodies are made up of 50-75% water. Water makes up an estimated 60% of our body weight. Many parts of the body contain great amounts of water. The blood contains 83% water, the muscles 75%, the brain 74%, and the bone 22%. Water is composed of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. The hydrogen atoms are attached to either sides of the oxygen atom. Water is called the universal solvent because it dissolves more quickly than any other liquid substance.

The benefits of water intake are endless. Consumption of water takes the toxins out of the body, builds up the body's immunity to viruses, bacteria and many illnesses. It is an immunity booster. Water moistens tissues such as those found in the mouth, eyes, and nose, lubricates joints and muscles, regulates body temperature, protects organs and tissues, and helps makes nutrients available to the body. It also carries nutrients and oxygen to the cells and, in proper amounts, increases weight loss. It is natural moisturizer and gives skin a healthy glow. Water leaves the skin smoother, softer, more supple and with fewer wrinkles. It can prevent the stomach distress that many medicines cause, and it rids the body of excessive sodium that can causes fluid retention. Strangely, drinking more water enables the body to get rid of more water. The body tends to hold onto more water when it senses as shortage. The proper water intake controls blood pressure, balances electrolytes, insulates the body, and keeps the body from getting dangerously cold. It also controls hunger pangs. Drinking the

appropriate amount of water also helps fight afternoon fatigue and maintain mental alertness throughout the day.

Every day you lose water due to urination, sweat, bowel movements and loss moisture through your breath. Foods provide the body with an estimated 20% of the daily water required; the remaining 80% must in liquid form. Fruits and vegetables contain up to 80% water, meats are compromised of 50-65% water and bread contains 35% water.

Experts agree that water intake must be at least eight glasses a day for individuals with a sedentary lifestyles; although, ideally women should drink nine cups a day and men should drink thirteen. Casual exercisers should replace water fluid with one or two cups every hour and those engaging in intense sports that last more than 45 minutes a day (such as tennis, running, weight lifting, and bicycling) should intake three cups of water an hour in addition to a sports drink. Hot weather, dry environments, pregnancy, viral infections and illnesses require an increase in water intake.

Dehydration is a common problem. Signs of dehydration include mild to excessive thirst, headache, fatigue, little or no urination, muscle weaknesses, dizziness, or lightheadedness. Early detection of these symptoms with increased intake of water can deter the problem of heat cramps or heat exhaustion. As little as two percent loss of proper water intake can result in lack of athletic performance and ten percent decrease in the body's water supply can cause these medical symptoms. Dehydration, if not tended quickly, may affect present and future workouts. If you urine is bright or golden yellow, you are not drinking enough water. A strong odor in the urine is

another sign of dehydration. Urine that is clear or very pale yellow indicates that you are drinking enough water. Hyponatremia, an intake of too much water causing imbalance of electrolytes, is rare condition and usually does not happen during water consumption. If you feel bloated or too full after drinking water, however, you may be taking in too much water.

There are many ways to increase water intake: drink two cups of water at every meal, carry a water bottle, drink two cups of water after rising in the morning, and hydrate before exercise with two cups of water and one cup for each half hour of exercise. You should drink water every 15-30 minutes while exercising. Keeping a water bottle with you is an effective way to help you remember to drink often. Some people chart how much water they have consumed in a food journal or wall chart. After a serious bout of exercise, be sure to weigh yourself before and after exercise. Any weight lost during that interval is actually water loss and must be replaced by 2 ½ cups for every pound loss during exercise. You have no excuse not to drink up and increase your water intake for better health!

References

Benefits of Water

<http://www.shapefit.com/water-benefits.html>

Benefits of Drinking Water

<http://www.gardenandhearth.com/fitness/Benefits-of-Drinking-Water.htm>

Drink to your health

http://www.dining.ucla.edu/housing_site/dining/SNAC_pdf/DrinkToYourHealth.pdf

Drink to your health... with water!

<http://www.betterwayhealth.com/drinking-water.asp>

The Facts on Water and Exercise

http://www.aarp.org/health/fitness/work_out/the_facts_on_water_and_exercise.html

Water Properties

<http://www.gardenandhearth.com/fitness/Benefits-of-Drinking-Water.htm>