

## **Wellness: Be Healthy:**

**Fact:** In the hot months, don't drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar – these actually cause you to lose more body fluid.

### **Article of the Month: The Importance of Hydration**

An average adult body is 50 to 65 percent water; that's roughly 45 quarts. Water plays several crucial roles in the body. It helps regulate temperature, carries nutrients and oxygen, and removes waste. It also cushions joints and organs, which is why it is important to focus on your personal well-being by reminding yourselves to re-hydrate our body fluids in the summer months.

#### ***Hydration - A Great Sensation***

*By: Sandy Killam-Hall, MS, RD, LD*

**Water is by far the most essential nutrient to the body.** It is part of every cell, tissue and organ and accounts for 60 percent of body weight. Water is a basic requirement for all living things. We tend to forget how important it is until we get too little or in rare incidences, too much.

Not supplying your body with needed water leads to dehydration, which stresses the heart and raises your core body temperature quickly, especially during exercise or in hot weather. The combination of dehydration, exercise, and heat can lead to heat related-illness and heat stroke, a potentially life-threatening condition. Even mild dehydration, as little as one to two percent of your body weight, can make you feel tired.

**What goes in comes out.** Everyday you lose about 2.5 liters of water through normal sweating, exhalation and elimination. To function properly, you need to replace this daily water loss by consuming beverages and foods.

**How much water do I need?** The National Institute of Medicine recommends about 2.2 liters, or about nine cups for women, and 3 liters, about 13 cups for men everyday. Certain conditions may increase or decrease your individual needs. In general, signs of a well-hydrated body include:

- Pale yellow or colorless urine (Urine is darker first thing in the morning)
- Quenched thirst
- Feeling well

#### **Sometimes you might need more (or less). When you are ill, you need more than a pill.**

Health conditions such as fever, vomiting, or diarrhea cause your body to lose extra fluids. A large infection or wound on your skin can increase your needs as well. Drink more water or oral rehydration solutions (Sports Drinks or solutions sold in pharmacies such as Pedialyte) to replace what you have lost. People with heart, liver, kidney, or adrenal diseases may need to limit the amount their intake.

**Hot, cold or high in the sky.** Sweating in the heat or under multiple layers of winter clothing causes you to lose more fluids. You can also lose moisture through your skin from heated indoor air. Higher altitudes (above 8,200 feet) can increase respiration and urination, increasing your fluid needs.

**When you move it.** Generally, you should consume two cups of water two hours prior to your activity, then about one-half cup every 15 minutes during your activity. If you exercise more than an hour, drink an oral rehydration solution to replace electrolytes and glucose. If you are an athlete, weigh yourself if you anticipate a long workout. For every pound you lose, drink two cups of liquid.

**Drinking for two or more.** When you are pregnant you should have a little more than two liters (about ten cups) of fluids per day. If you're nursing, drink about three liters (13 cups) per day.

**Running on Empty.** If you think you might be dehydrated, stop and take care of yourself. Signs and symptoms of dehydration range from minor to severe, and can include any or all of the following:

- Dry Mouth
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Muscle Cramps
- Weak or rapid pulse
- Confusion
- Sluggishness
- Fainting
- Inability to sweat
- Decrease Urine Output

**May I get you a drink?** You can meet your fluid needs by drinking beverages other than water. Juice, soft drinks and smoothies all count towards your daily intake. Even coffee, tea and alcoholic beverages contain fluid. Just keep in mind that caffeine and alcohol can have a diuretic effect and make you lose water. A well-rounded diet usually supplies about twenty percent of most people's fluid needs.

**When enough is enough** - Hyponatremia, an abnormally low concentration of sodium in the blood, may occur if you consume an excessive amount of water, diluting electrolytes in the body. Hyponatremia can also occur after extended periods of physical activity and profuse sweating if you drink too many fluids and don't replace electrolytes too.

#### **Functions of Water in the Body**

- Transports nutrients
- Carries away waste
- Hydrates skin
- Moistens eyes, mouth and nose
- Ensures adequate blood volume
- Forms main component of body fluids
- Participates in many chemical reactions
- Helps maintain normal body temperature
- Acts as a lubricant around joints
- Serves as a shock absorber inside the spinal cord and amniotic sac surrounding a fetus

If you need more information contact:

The American Dietetic Association: 1.800.877.1600 or [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

Family Doctor: [www.familydoctor.com](http://www.familydoctor.com)

Mayo Clinic: [www.MayoClinic.com](http://www.MayoClinic.com)