Symptoms of Dehydration & Benefits of Proper Hydration – Are you Getting Enough Water?

The human body is about is 70% water. Newborns are roughly 80% water, and elderly are as little as 50% water. Our muscles are about 75% water. Even our bones, which seem completely solid, are 25% water. Without food, we would eventually die, but without water, we would die a lot sooner. Depending on the amount of fat and muscle in our bodies, most of us can live several weeks without food, 5-7 weeks on average. The average person can only survive 5 days without water. Undoubtedly, water is life.

A Constant State of Dehydration is the Norm, not the Exception

Most people do not drink enough water. So of course, dehydration is very common. People normally drink water only when they are thirsty, or when their mouth is dry. Thirst and a dry mouth are signs of dehydration. If we drink water only when thirsty, we are perpetually dehydrated.

Too often, when people increase the amount of water they drink, they find they spend way too much time running to the bathroom. Naturally, they believe frequent bathroom trips are a symptom of too much water. Even though this may sound counterintuitive, this is usually not the case.

When we are not getting adequate water, our bodies go into a kind of survival mode and release aldosterone, a hormone that encourages water retention. Water is retained for vital organs

such as the brain, heart, lungs, liver and kidneys.

Toxins and waste build up in this retained water – toxins and waste that our bodies ideally eliminate on a daily basis. When we increase our water intake, the body begins flushing out the water that has been retained in our organs and tissues, replacing it with clean water. With adequate hydration, this process will continue for a few days to a week before the frequency of urination decreases.

Signs of Dehydration

There are many other signs of dehydration including:

- Back pain
- Cramps
- Constipation
- Decreased urine output
- Dizziness
- Dry skin
- Dry, sticky mouth
- Fatigue
- Forgetfulness
- Feeling lightheaded
- Headache
- Heartburn
- Irritability
- Indigestion
- Yellow urine

Less common, but other possible signs of dehydration include:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Depression
- High blood pressure
- Migraines

Signs of severe dehydration include:

- Confusion
- Extreme thirst
- Extremely dry mouth
- Delirium
- Fever
- Little to no urine, or very dark colored urine
- Listlessness
- Low blood pressure
- Rapid breathing
- Rapid heartbeat
- Sunken eyes
- Skin so dry and shriveled that it loses elasticity
- Unconsciousness

Doctors are Unlikely to Diagnose Mild to Moderate Dehydration

When you go to the doctor with complaints of back pain, constipation, muscle cramps, persistent headaches, or other symptoms of dehydration, doctors are more likely to prescribe medication than suggest you drink more water. There are many reasons for this. Doctors make more money when they write prescriptions, and their patients might think their money wasted if the medical advice they paid top dollar for was simply, “Drink more water.” Also, sadly, many doctors may not recognize the symptoms as dehydration.

“At medical schools more than 600 hundred teaching hours are allocated to the use of pharmaceutical products. Only a few hours are allocated to instructions on diet and food.” F. Batmanghelidj M.D.

Staying hydrated is good advice that is rarely taken seriously. Nearly all of the body’s functions run on water. Water is needed as the delivery system for oxygen, and

nutrients. It is a crucial component of our nervous system and the medium by which the nervous system sends its signals. Water is also needed for our bodies to efficiently remove toxins.

When dehydrated, even when mildly dehydrated, our joints are robbed of fluids, since the body considers these areas of the body to be less vital. Cartilage is around five times slicker than ice; it is the ultimate lubrication for our joints. Nothing man-made functions as well as cartilage does. One of the best ways to keep cartilage in good condition is to stay hydrated; cartilage is 80% water. Dehydration wears down cartilage. Sadly, joint replacement surgery is a poor replacement for healthy joints. Replaced joints only last 10-15 years, and they don't work as well as the real thing.

Back Pain is A Common Symptom of Dehydration

Do you ever suffer from back pain? If so, does your back hurt more in the morning? Many of us lose water throughout the night with nighttime bathroom runs and night sweats. If we don't think to replace those fluids, dehydration results which inflames the kidneys, and this can cause to back pain. Whenever your back hurts, try drinking several glasses of water. The pain usually subsides. This makes sense because the fluid inside the body's spinal discs supports 75% of the body's weight.

"When the disks in your spine lack water, they begin to degenerate and herniate more quickly. It's similar to driving a car on underinflated tires. The tires will either wear out faster or eventually blow out." Don Colbert M.D.

Water is What Does All the Work

Water is the workhorse of our digestive system. Water is the primary part of all of our digestive fluids. Saliva, bile, stomach acid, pancreatic juices, and the mucus that lines our gastrointestinal tract are mostly water. Without adequate water intake, the digestive system doesn't work as it should. The mucous layer in our stomach is actually 98% water, and this is the best protection against heartburn. The mucous layer contains bicarbonate, which effectively neutralizes stomach acid. When our bodies have adequate water this mucous layer is thick, but when we do not it is very thin. Contrary to popular belief heartburn is not caused by an antacid deficiency, but rather it is usually caused by a water deficiency. Water is the most effective heartburn medication there is, and the cheapest, too. Water doesn't just help to prevent heartburn, water helps in all stages of digestion. We recommend that you avoid drinking lots of water *with* your food, because this can water down your digestive fluids. Drinking a lot of water before or an hour after eating is ideal.

A Natural Cure All

People who suffer from asthma and/or allergies typically have high histamine levels. Histamine forces the muscles in the bronchial tubes to constrict, which inhibits airflow through the lungs. Studies have shown that histamine levels drop as water intake increases. If you suffer from asthma or allergies "…water may improve your symptoms more than the latest round of inhalers or pills from pharmaceutical companies." Don Colbert M.D.

Water is good for vascular health as well. Blood is more than 80% water. Adequate water intake can help to lower blood pressure, and it can play a part in preventing strokes and heart attacks. When we are dehydrated our blood is thicker and

more prone to clotting.

Our brains, which are very sensitive to dehydration, are about 85% water. One of the easiest ways to improve brain function, especially your memory, is to increase water intake.

Water also enhances immune system function. Common medical advice is to drink lots of water when we are sick, but if we drink adequate amounts of water all the time, we are less likely to get sick in the first place. Daily intake is dependent upon weight, climate, and activity level – roughly half a gallon to a gallon a day for a person weighing 150 lbs. Drink enough water that you don't feel thirsty.

Tap water is full of chemicals including pharmaceuticals, fluoride, chlorine, and chemical contaminants. Tap water is not the best water to drink. Bottled water can be better, but some bottled water is literally just tap water in a bottle. There are very few regulations controlling bottled water, and it's hard to find water from a good source. Ideally, water should be from a natural source, high in minerals, very low in contaminants, and sold in a glass bottle. But the ideal is hard to find, especially at an affordable price. When ideal water isn't available and affordable, we recommend buying distilled water. Distilled water is bereft of minerals but eating a variety of raw produce easily replaces those minerals. Spending a little more on higher quality water is an investment in your health and is certainly worthwhile.

Many people drink other fluids instead of water. Although it is true that these drinks are mostly water, the caffeine, sugar or artificial flavors and colors put a strain on your body in various ways, and this can cost your body more water than what was consumed in the drink. For those who want to drink more water, but need flavors and sweetness, here's a recipe for cranberry lemonade that helps detoxify the body as well. If you love juicing, skip the sugar and try doing the truly healthy fresh juices like with this Golden Milk Tea

Recipe.

Conclusion

If you're not consuming enough water, you're increasing the strain on your body, and accelerating the aging process. It is harder than most people think to drink too much water, and drinks that contain caffeine or sugar are very poor substitutes that rob the body of water (and minerals) with high acidity. There is no other substance that is as important to our health as water is. For more on detoxifying, lowering blood pressure, and getting the most from water, check out the previous cranberry lemonade link, and Hot & Cold Hydrotherapy. For the best water to detoxify with, see the first source below.

Further Reading:

- *What's the Best Water for Detoxifying and For Drinking?*
- *Why Water Fluoridation Continues, Despite Flying in the Face of Science*
- *What's in Your Water?*

Sources:

- *The Healing Properties of Water* – Dr. Brifa.com
- *Diseases and Conditions Dehydration* – Mayo Clinic
- *Dehydration* – Medline Plus
- Water: For Health, For Healing, For Life by F. Batmanghelidj M.D.
- Seven Pillars of Health by Don Colbert M.D.