



Work Smart Live Smart

Water

A Necessity In Maintaining Mental Health

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Water is vital to life and it is often overlooked as a stress reliever.

Every cell and every system in the body is dependent on water for healthy functioning. Normal daily activity causes the loss of about 2 litres (6-8 cups) of water, which must be replaced throughout the day. Our brains are composed of approximately 70% water and our blood is more than 85% water and according to research, a 5% drop in body fluids will cause a 25% to 30% loss of energy in the average person and a 15% drop in body fluids causes death.

It can be quite dangerous to rely on thirst alone in determining your body's need for water. In fact, if you feel thirsty, you are probably already dehydrated. As we age, we lose our perception of thirst and usually fail to drink adequate amounts of water.

According to one website on the benefits of water, it is estimate that about 80% of our North American population suffers from energy loss due to minor dehydration. When you do not drink enough water, not only can you experience the physical effects of dehydration, but you will also experience the mental impact.

Some early signs of dehydration include:

- Fatigue – lack of water is a major cause of daytime fatigue
- Muscle weakness
- Poor concentration
- Fogginess
- Headaches
- Stiff joints
- Dry eyes or nasal passages
- Dry mouth

Further dehydration may lead to:

- Other Depressive symptoms including moodiness, apathy and sleep disturbances
- Anxiety
- Tension
- Hypertension
- Overeating
- Higher blood cholesterol

- Constipation
- Kidney stones
- Certain types of cancer and diabetes

Consuming water is such a simple wellness strategy that it is often not even considered when developing out a personal health plan. Many of the symptoms of dehydration are mistakenly associated with other conditions and illnesses and could be easily eliminated by increasing water consumption.

Outcomes Of Adequate Water Consumption:

- Increases energy and focus
- Hydrates the cells and organs
- Hydrates the skin – (water reaches the skin last in the body)
- Cleanses the body of toxins
- Lubricates the vocal cords
- Enhance the digestion and absorption of nutrients
- Helps prevent constipation
- Helps kidneys functioning
- Regulates body temperature
- Keeps blood from thickening and controls blood pressure
- Carries nutrients and oxygen
- Lubricates joints and cushions the body's organs
- Decreases risk of cancer (In one study, drinking 5 glasses of water daily decreased the risk of colon cancer by 45%, breast cancer by 79%, and bladder cancer by 50%)

How much is enough?

If your goal is to maintain a minimum level of hydration than the '8 glass' rule is acceptable. However, if your goal is to carry a buffer against toxic chemicals, offset the negative impact of processed and preserved foods that are consumed, or compensate for additional activity, than we should drink 9 or more glasses per day.

10 Water Tips:

1. Most of your water should come from beverages that do not contain caffeine since caffeine acts as a diuretic. We need to increase our water intake by 2 cups for every 1 cup of caffeinated beverage. Decaffeinated coffee is still about 35% caffeine and in some cases has extra chemicals added to it in the process. Green tea still contains caffeine even though it also contains anti-oxidants.
2. Decrease the consumption of pop. The active ingredient in pop is phosphoric acid, which will leach calcium from the bones and is a major contributor to osteoporosis. It also confuses the body's thirst response with the hunger response. It generally takes about 1 month of drinking water instead of pop to reduce the sugar craving and appreciate the flavour of pure water

3. Alcohol, like caffeine, is also dehydrating
4. Keep water with you when you are at work, home or at play
5. Increase the consumption of watery foods such as soup, cucumbers, tomatoes and other fruits
6. Take the urine test – if it is pale and almost colourless than you are well hydrated – it is dark than you probably need more fluids
7. Get in the habit of drinking water a half an hour before meals – like sugar from pop and sugar-based drinks we often we use food to suppress our need for water
8. Cool water is easier on the stomach and digestive system, however, cold water uses more calories as the body tries to warm up
9. When exercising, drink more water to compensate for the extra loss and try sipping along the way
10. Develop a program to consciously increase your water intake over a couple of weeks. This allows your body to compensate and to minimize the bathroom trips.

Increasing your daily intake of water can significantly increase energy and decrease mental confusion, which can help you stay mentally healthy. Such a simple strategy with such powerful results.

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

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