

Hydrate for Health this Summer

What does American basketball athlete LeBron James have in common with an older adult? Well, besides LeBron James will become an older adult himself. Both need to drink more fluids but cannot rely on the sense of thirst to ensure they hydrate enough.

Hydration is necessary for all bodily functions, including lubricating joints, regulating body temperature, and maintaining electrolytes balance.

Did you know dehydration is a common cause of hospitalization among elderly adults? Follow these considerations to ensure you are staying healthy with enough hydration.

Older Adults have higher Dehydration Risk

Imagine you just got back in the house after taking a walk outside in sun. The sense of thirst makes you reach for a glass of cold water. In the youth, this sense of thirst through the day reminds you to drink fluid often. As you age, your sense of thirst diminishes. You might not be giving your body enough water it needs.

Older adults are at a higher risk of dehydration. Some common medicines make it more important to drink plenty of fluids to avoid irritation to the digestive tract. Fluids also allow the body to absorb some medicines properly.

Your body composition changes as you age. Lean muscles hold more water than fat tissues. This means as you lose lean muscle mass, your body holds less water than younger adults.

Dehydration Signals Unrecognized

Common early signs of dehydration such as a dry mouth, tiredness, dizziness, and headaches are often dismissed as normal effects of underlying medical conditions or aging. When you experience any of those signs, start with drinking a glass of water and see if the symptoms go away.

All Fluids Matter

The U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recommend that men drink 13 cups of fluid and women drink 9 cups of fluid each day. The conventional wisdom of 6-8 glasses of water is a good goal to aim for.

All fluids count towards hydration, sort of. Water, milk, juices, soups, coffee/tea, and even soda all count. Here is the caveat. Go easy on the soda and juices because you can consume too many added sugars along with the fluid. Keep the juice to no more than one 8-oz cup a day. You can dilute the juice with water to slow down the rise of blood sugar.

Don't forget to eat more refreshing vegetables and summer fruits as they are 90% water, not to mention the source of healthful vitamins and minerals. Examples are watermelon, cucumber, strawberries, peaches, cantaloupe, lettuce, and spinach.

Drink Alcohol Wisely

Alcohol can be present at many summer festivities. Alcohol is diuretic. It can cause your body to lose more water by increasing urination. If you do drink alcohol, the recommendation is to limit

one drink for women and two drinks for men per day. Make sure you drink an additional cup of water if you partake in alcohol.

Add flavor the healthy way

Want to punch up the flavor of plain water? Infuse the water with a few thin slices of summer fruit and/or herbs for a refreshing taste without the added sugar. Fruit can get mushy in water. Remember to remove the fruit from the water container after a couple of hours at room temperature, or after 6 hours refrigerated.

Here are some fruit infusion ideas:

- Cucumber, Lemon, and mint leaves
- Grape, Strawberry, and lime
- Kiwi and Orange

Simple Hydration Tips

- Use a visual reminder. Fill 2 large 20 oz. bottles with water in the morning. If one bottle is empty by noon and the second bottle empty by mid-afternoon, you are drinking 5 cups of fluid by then. Great job! Refill one bottle for the evening to get close to 8 cups by the end of the day.
- Consult your doctor if you are told to limit fluid intake.
- Here is a ninja move – pre-hydrate BEFORE activities. Drink an 8 oz. glass of water before gardening or exercising outdoors. Rehydrate during and after the activity. Traveling this summer? Drink a bottle of water before boarding the plane.
- Have a cup of brothy soup as an afternoon snack
- Drink 4-8 oz. of water every time you take medications.

Follow these simple hydration tips this summer, to help your body function at its best. Enjoy your leisure and physical activities this season, while knowing you are supporting your body with proper hydration!



(photo credit: cottonbro)

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