

EHC-D Newsletter

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Water...

How much is enough?

C.U.D. is chronic, unintended dehydration. Most individuals function in a chronically dehydrated state and are unaware of the importance of proper hydration. Approximately 60% of the human body is comprised of water.

Water is critical for the regulation of body temperature, blood pressure, heart function, joint lubrication and memory. Water is also essential for nutrient delivery and metabolic waste elimination from the body. In a state of dehydration, the kidneys turn to the liver for backup assistance overburdening the liver's detoxification capabilities and diminishing the liver's ability to convert stored fat into usable energy. The resulting reduced blood volume seen from dehydration can further cripple the body's ability to rid itself of noxious chemicals and to incorporate vital nutrients.

Some of the signs of mild dehydration can include: decreased coordination, fatigue, headache, low urine output, dry skin and mucous membranes, asthma and allergies. Thirst is not an adequate indication of when to replace fluids because the body is generally already in a state of dehydration when thirst is signaled. Often the feeling of hunger can actually be an indicator of the need for hydration. Interestingly, one of the functions of histamine in the body is to regulate the body's thirst mechanism and to conserve and regulate the body's water reserves. Dehydration thus can lead to increased levels of histamine throughout the body which in turn can exacerbate allergies and heighten environmental sensitivities.

The average person loses about 3-4 liters of fluid a day through sweat, urine, bowel movements and exhaled respiration. Just breathing alone can be responsible for 1-2 liters of daily fluid loss. Exercise, excessive sweating, diarrhea, higher temperatures and altitudes can all contribute to an even greater daily fluid loss. Urine color can be an indication of dehydration and used to monitor short term hydration levels. A state of dehydration will yield more concentrated urine having a dark yellow or even orange appearance. Proper hydration should render the urine a very light yellow or clear color.

So how much water is generally regarded as enough? The most common formula for minimum daily fluid replacement is to divide one's weight in pounds by 2. This number will represent the daily minimum water intake amount in ounces (1 ounce = 0.029 liters). For example, a person weighing 200 lbs. (to convert from metric, 1 kilogram = 2.20 lbs.) would divide their weight by 2 and thus their minimal daily water requirement would be 100 ounces (or 2.9 liters). Food may contribute to some basic fluid replacement but it is generally not enough to offset one's water needs based upon this formula.

Water is best consumed evenly throughout the day, keeping in mind not to drink fluids during meal time as liquids can dilute digestive secretions. Caffeinated drinks can actually further dehydration due to caffeine's diuretic properties so these drinks should be avoided or at least not counted toward daily water requirements. Also, carbonated water can leach calcium out of the body and may affect the body's delicate electrolyte balance; therefore, carbonated water should be minimally consumed.

When it comes to warding off the detrimental effects of dehydration and supporting the body's many water dependant functions, there really is no healthier choice than adequate consumption of pure, filtered glass-bottled water.

This article was written by Barbara Fritts Pond, EHC-D staff member and should not be construed as medical advice. For personal evaluation, please consult with one of our EHC-D doctors by calling 214-368-4132. If you do not wish to receive e-mail correspondence, please respond as such to this e-mail.