



Dehydration

Water is one the most important nutrients in the human body. It is a part of every cell, tissue, organ and body process, and is important in these body functions:

- Cushions joints and strengthens muscles
- Removes waste from the body
- Regulates body temperature
- Carries nutrients, oxygen and glucose to cells to give us energy
- Provides moisture to skin and other tissues

Adults should drink at least eight (8) glasses of water per day. Water also comes from fruits and vegetables. A single slice of watermelon is over 90 % water, so this a good source of water. Other great sources of water include milk and juice. If we do not get enough water we can become dehydrated. Caffeinated and sweetened drinks are not part of the solution because they can contribute to dehydration.

Causes of dehydration include:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Excessive sweating or urine output
- Acute illness with decreased appetite.

Any time a child is ill, the parents should consider the possibility of dehydration. A health care provider should be contacted if you feel they are becoming dehydrated.

Some signs of dehydration are:

- Dry lips, mouth and/or skin
- Nausea
- Dark colored urine or infrequent urination
- Constipation
- Increased body temperature or labored breathing
- Wrinkled skin which may lack its normal elasticity and sag back into position slowly when pinched into a fold

- **Headache**
- **Markedly sunken fontanel(s) (soft spot in the skull of infants)**

Benefits of drinking water:

1. **Weight Control:** Drinking water helps you feel full and reduces appetite and thirst.
2. **Improved bladder and bowel functioning**
3. **Improved Respiratory Function:** Dehydration causes mucous membranes to become dry and increases the risk of upper respiratory infection.

Fluids by mouth may be sufficient for mild dehydration, but hospitalization with intravenous fluids may be necessary for moderate to severe cases of dehydration.

Tips to help prevent dehydration:

1. **Choose the cooler part of the day for physical outdoor activities.**
2. **If you are going to be in the sun for either work or play, drink plenty of fluids.**
3. **Pedialyte(tm), which contains the correct amount of electrolytes, is available for infants.**
4. **Keep a large tumbler of water close by while working during the day, to sip on.**
5. **Drink water consistently throughout the day and don't wait until you feel thirsty.**

ATTENTION: This web page is intended to be used for health information ONLY. If you or a family member has a medical emergency, please call your doctor or 911, or your local emergency service number.