



Water: The Importance of Staying Hydrated

by Kenda Riggs

“If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water.” ~ Loren Eiseley

“Pure water is the world’s first and foremost medicine.”

~ Slovakian Proverb

Water is an essential component of life, and staying hydrated is vital to our survival. It is interesting as the human body is actually made up of 60-70% water. Drinking plenty of refreshing clean water is a simple yet crucial part of maintaining good health. We need to consume water every day to perform at our very best. And even though many of us are aware that proper hydration provides amazing benefits for our mind and body, many people still drink less water than is required for their daily fluid intake. This means that many people are living chronically dehydrated on a daily basis. As a teacher, this can have serious impacts, not only on your overall health and wellbeing, but on how you feel physically, emotionally, cognitively, and psychologically, both inside and outside of the classroom.

What Does Water Do for You?

Simply put, water is excellent for you. It has many functions within the human body. For your body, water helps to regulate your internal body temperature, lubricates and cushions joints, supplies cells with oxygen and nutrients, gets rid of waste in the body, and helps to protect your spinal cord. It can help with digestion and circulation.

For your mind, water helps with providing clarity and focus on your thought processes, while enhancing cognitive performance and productivity. Lack of water to the brain can cause brain fog, exhaustion, sleep issues, stress, anger, and depression. It can also impact your short-term memory and the recall of your long-term memory. However, drinking water can improve one’s brain health by simply increasing blood flow and oxygen to the brain. Staying hydrated boosts your brain power!

Barriers to Proper Hydration

One of the biggest challenges identified by teachers is the lack of time to either get water or a water refill for themselves at work. With the busy schedules of the day, teachers may often forget to hydrate or may not get an opportunity to refill their water. However, this needs to be an important component of the day as research has shown that even mild dehydration can negatively impact us at work.

As dehydration will occur when we lose more bodily fluids than we are taking in, it is clear that hydration is a workplace necessity for teachers. When the body suffers from a water deficiency, the lymphatic system – which helps maintain fluid balance – will ensure that only essential cells stay hydrated at a cost to the less important ones. This causes the body to perform less efficiently. As dehydration sets in, some symptoms that you may experience include headaches, feeling weak or dizzy, fatigue, dry mouth, lips and eyes, feelings of confusion, and lack of focus.

It is also important to remember that when exposed to warmer temperatures, when being more physically active, or taking certain medications, you need more water to replenish your system as you can become dehydrated more easily.

A simple test to evaluate if you are dehydrated or hydrated is the color of your urine. Dark yellow to amber urine may indicate dehydration, while a pale yellow means you’re properly hydrated.

Reasons to Drink More Water

Although this can change for different individuals depending on your health needs, the recommended daily water intake is six to eight glasses of water per day for adults.

Proper hydration is needed for your body to keep up with important health functions. In addition to

other health benefits of water already alluded to, it is important to drink water to:

- Maintain healthy skin.
- Aid in food digestion.
- Deliver oxygen throughout the body.
- Help maintain blood pressure.
- Prevent kidney damage.
- Keep good heart health.
- Produce necessary bodily fluids, such as tears and saliva.
- Think clearly.
- Boost brain performance.

Water is a healthy energy provider, and proper hydration helps maintain clear thinking and better concentration, improves memory, along with work productivity. Furthermore, consuming enough water hydrates your skin and hair, and flushes toxins out of your body. With respect to joint pain, as the cartilage in our joints contain approximately 80% water, staying hydrated helps joints stay well-lubricated. Water also keeps you feeling refreshed and can improve your overall mood. Finally, you need water for survival, as water allows nutrients and oxygen to travel to organs and cells.

Other Ways to Keep Hydrated

Consuming foods that are high in water content can help increase water intake. Fruits and vegetables such as apples, oranges, watermelon, cucumber, and lettuce are all great foods to eat to help increase water consumption.

Always keep a bottle of water with you during the day, so you are reaching for clear water to hydrate rather than sugary drinks or caffeine. If you don't like the taste of plain water, try adding a slice of lemon or lime to your drink of water.

Also, as a health and wellness strategy, try drinking a glass of water when you wake up, before each meal, and one hour before bed to replenish any lost fluids and to keep yourself hydrated while sleeping.

Many teachers will find that reminders on their phone can help with tracking and monitoring daily water consumption. There are free water apps for your Android or IOS device that you can download to help keep track of daily fluid intake.

And remember...

Make sure you are getting enough clean water into your body every day. Even mild dehydration can affect you mentally and physically. Although we know drinking water is essential to staying alive, it is often a neglected daily routine. Increasing your awareness around dehydration symptoms, being more mindful to how you are feeling and your water

consumption during the day, and keeping a water bottle near you at all times to help remind you to keep hydrated with clean water are important daily strategies to use.

On a final note... March 22, 2023 was recently observed as the United Nations World Water Day, a day dedicated to celebrating and highlighting the importance of fresh water, and to draw attention to water-related issues that humans face in almost every country. Those living in Canada who are able to have access to fresh water are very fortunate to have such accessibility to clean drinking water, so remember to keep hydrated. It is not only a necessity, but an important component of your self care.

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