

Hydration for Health, Water for Life

By Susan Sherriff

Wise up on water

Water is often overlooked as one of the six basic nutrients (along with carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, proteins and minerals) needed for positive well-being and better quality of life for the elderly. Water can make a valuable contribution to health in old age. As we get older our body's receptor for thirst decreases. To stay hydrated do not depend on feeling thirsty. Thirst may not be a reliable guide to tell you when you're becoming dehydrated, especially for older adults.

Evidence for drinking water

Medical evidence shows that good hydration can assist in the management of diabetes, urinary tract infections, incontinence, constipation, kidney stones, heart disease, low blood pressure, cognitive impairment, falls, poor oral health, skin conditions, help prevent pressure ulcers, and many other illnesses.

Proper hydration will increase blood circulation to all vital organs including skin which will prevent and help heal pressure ulcers. Drinking water will stimulate urination and help the body flush out bacteria. Drinking extra water will help stimulate the bladder for healthy bladder function; experiencing fewer incontinent episodes is one effective way to prevent urinary tract infections.

Dehydration lowers blood pressure which causes confusion and dizziness. Dehydration is the leading cause of falls. Balanced hydration is essential for the safety and efficacy of some medications. One class of medications affected by hydration status is the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs NSAIDs (these include Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Ketoprofen, and Naproxen) which has the potential to cause kidney damage in response to dehydration.



Drinking water is a key element in maintaining health for the elderly

Tips for Water Consumption

- A glass of water five minutes before standing will help stabilize blood pressure and prevent fainting.
- Drink a glass of fresh water when you get up in the morning.
- Have a jug of water readily available with thinly sliced oranges, limes, lemons, and ice cubes.
- Drink small quantities throughout the day. Drink water at mealtimes and also between meals.
- Eat foods high in water content, such as fruits and vegetables
- Substitute hot caffeinated beverages for hot water with pieces of fruit in it.

Questions

Is tap water safe to drink?

Yes. The United States water supply is completely safe to drink and of high quality.

Do I need to filter or treat my tap water before I serve it to drink?

No. The tap water you receive is carefully monitored, tested and is supplied ready to drink straight from the tap. Sometimes filters will polish the taste slightly, but the same effect can normally be achieved by leaving the water to chill in the fridge this will help take away any chlorine taste.

If I drink more water, will I have increased bladder function?

Yes, for a while, and that's a very positive change. People will use the toilet more often if they drink more, and while there are perceived problems in the extra effort of more frequent visits, people also need to be aware of the serious ill-effects of not drinking enough and not going to the toilet often enough. Evidence shows, however, that the restriction of overall fluid intake does not reduce urinary incontinence frequency or severity.

Start drinking early with a fresh glass of water. Promote the fact that water 'flushes through' the system and helps to prevent kidney stones, UTIs and constipation. Increased bladder function may also help reduce the need for additional medication.

What are the immediate benefits of hydration?

Water is an essential nutrient and dehydration is a common problem for the elderly population. There is evidence that improving water intake:

- Reduces constipation and subsequent medication
- Reduces confusion (with reduced risks of falls and fractures)
- Reduces headaches

- Reduces urinary tract infections
- Improves skin integrity and reduces the risk of pressure sores
- Improves blood pressure
- Reduces consumption of unhealthy caffeine, alcohol, soft drinks and sparkling drinks
- Reduces the cost of providing other commercial beverages.

Sources:

<http://my.clevelandclinic.org>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dehydration/basics/definition/con-20030056>



HomeAid Health Care
Helping Hands at Home

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