

Daily Union Article
Saturday, July 20, 2019
Title: Drink Up During Dog Days

Did you know that the phrase “dog days of summer” isn't technically about lazy dogs lying on the porch in this hot weather? Many of us have been raised with the phrase without knowing it's original meaning. Just the same, this hot humid weather makes us think of the term that way. Keeping our bodies healthy during the summer months requires just as much planning and precaution as it does in the winter months.

During these summer months, we try to find ways to have fun and enjoy spending time with family and friends. The sun shines brighter and hotter which drains our body of its water supply.

Why is water so important? Our adult body weight is made up of 55-75% water and the percentage is even higher for children. For adults, this equates to about 10 – 12 gallons of water (which varies from person to person.)

Water is critical to the functioning of our bodies. It helps our body transport nutrients through our blood. It helps our blood remove waste products from the body. Water is found in the linings of body organs and in the fluids that surround our body's organs. It is found in our joints, as well. This allows our body to move more easily. In our digestive system, water helps break down certain foods and transport it through the system. Water helps control our body's temperature, which must stay within a very narrow range. It does this internally by storing heat as needed, as well as externally through perspiration to help cool our body from the outside.

There are so many more purposes for water in our body, as well. Barbara Ames of the Wildcat K-State Research and Extension district has written an excellent resource about the functions and importance of water in our diet in her publication “Liquid Assets: The Value of Fluids to Your Health” which can be found online at <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/mf2739.pdf>.

It is easy, in the midst of summer activities and crazy schedules, to neglect our water consumption. Before we know it, we feel parched and start searching for a way to quench our thirst. Being thirsty is one of the first indications of mild to moderate dehydration. Your daily consumption of water will vary based on how active you are, the status of your health, and where you live.

The Institute of Medicine identifies that adequate intake for men is about 100 ounces or 13 cups. For women, the Institute recommends 73 ounces or 9 cups of fluid each day. For most adults, 80% of our water consumption needs are met by drinking water and caffeinated beverages, while 20% comes from the food we eat.

What are the best choices for keeping the body hydrated? You know the answer... WATER! It is the easiest liquid for the body to absorb. Cool water absorbs better than warm, hot, or ice water. Other good fluid sources include milk, 100% natural fruit juice, fruits and vegetables, soups, and broths. These foods have the added benefit of providing additional nutritive value to the fluids your body needs.

Be cautious of consuming large amounts of sports drinks, energy drinks, soda, and other carbonated beverages that typically have large amounts of sugar contained in them. Sugary drinks pull the fluid out of your stomach and intestines and can lead to gastric distress. These drinks also add significantly to your daily calorie intake. Water has no caloric content which contributes to why it is the best choice for beverage consumption.

Bottled water is another safe and reliable source of liquid in our diet. The availability of bottled water has increased significantly over the past several years. Not surprisingly, Americans spend billions of dollars each year on bottled water. What you may not know is that the bottled water industry is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It must meet specific standards of identity and quality for bottled water and manufacturing practices for processing and bottling. The FDA relies on state and local government to approve water sources. The International Bottled Water Association reports that about 98.5% of all bottled water sold in the U.S. is sourced domestically. Some states may add additional regulations for bottled water, as well.

Again, our summer months lend themselves well for outside summer fun. Our picnics and barbeque events often offer beer or other alcoholic beverages as drink alternatives. To reduce the risk of dehydration, alternate drinks between those that contain alcohol and those that don't. Alcohol is a powerful diuretic – meaning that it causes your body to rid itself of water and sodium. That's why drinking alcohol can significantly contribute to dehydration.

Kick back, enjoy summer, eat well, and drink lots of that 'cool, cool water'. For more information on healthy living, contact me at the Geary County Extension office (785) 238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!

Sidebar: Dog Days Differ

According to the National Geographic contributor Becky Little, the term "Dog Days" is rooted in the beliefs of ancient Greeks. It is based on their beliefs tied to astronomy. "Dog Days" occurred around the day when Sirius appeared to rise just before the sun – in late July. Greeks and Romans referred to these days as the hottest time of year, a time that could bring fever and/or catastrophe.

Keep in mind that just because July and August are the hottest months in the Northern Hemisphere, the hottest period can vary from year to year and place to place. Depending on where a person lives on our planet, the time of year for "dog days" is different. The farther north you live, the later the hottest temperatures will arrive. Consequently, the farther south you live, the earlier the heat arrives each year.