

The Daily Union Article
Saturday, March 14, 2019
Title: **Water and Your Health**

With all the snow and rain we have been getting, I am sure reading about the importance of water might cause you to pause. Yet, you know how very important water is to all living things including our own body. Why is it so important? Water is what makes all the systems in our body work. Because it is made from hydrogen and oxygen combined with naturally-occurring minerals, it is your best bet to rehydrate and energize!

Our body uses water for the following functions:

- ✓ Regulates the temperature in our body
- ✓ Lubricates and cushions our joints
- ✓ Protects our body – specifically the spinal cord and other sensitive tissue
- ✓ Keeps our body regular by ridding it of waste through urination, perspiration, and bowel movements

Water packs a powerful punch for your body's nutritional needs. The amount of water you need depends on your age, activity level, health status, and environmental conditions. As a general rule, men need more water than women and adults need more water than children. Can you drink too much water? Not really. Your body will regulate its fluid excretions to keep the balance it needs. More often than not, people drink too little water each day. Where do you fall on the spectrum?

Are you drinking enough water? For adults, the popular guideline to "drink 8 cups of water each day" is not supported by hard evidence, but it is easy to remember and is similar (1.9 liters) to the recommendation from the Institute of Medicine for total fluid intake from fluids and foods. The Institute of Medicine determined that an adequate intake (AI) for men is roughly about **13 cups (3 liters)** of total beverages a day. The AI for women is about **9 cups (2.2 liters)** of total beverages a day. Remember, thirst determines fluid needs. The smaller body size of a child and inability to tell when too thirsty or hot should be a red flag for parents on hot, humid days. Children, four to eight, require **1.3 liters (5.5 cups)**. Teenagers need to drink more-**about 1.8 liters (seven cups)** for girls and **2.6 liters (10.5 cups)** for boys.

If you drink water when you are thirsty and when you have meals, you can maintain your healthy water balance. However, when you are exercising, exposed to hot weather, or fighting an illness, you need more water to compensate for the loss of water. In these instances, you should drink *before* you become thirsty to prevent your body from experiencing an imbalance of water or dehydration.

Although most water needs are met by drinking water or consuming other beverages, many foods that are high in water contribute to your overall consumption each day. Soups and broths may contain as much as 85-95% water. Some fruits and vegetables, such as tomatoes, celery, oranges, and cantaloupe, are also high in water. Making sure that over half of every meal you consume is made up of fruits and vegetables not only keeps your plate healthy, it increases your overall daily water intake.

However, as noted above, you can't rely on the food you consume to meet your daily water needs. The large majority of your water comes from what you drink. Even this can be challenging, though. Not all beverages are created equal when it comes to their contribution to your overall daily water intake. Calories add up quickly when you consider the caloric value of your beverages. For example, a medium café latte (16 oz.) made with whole milk has about 265 calories in it. A 20-oz. bottle of cola has 227 calories and a sweetened ice tea has an estimated 180 calories. Choose your drink wisely. If you substitute each of these with an equal amount of drinking water, you would reduce your daily caloric intake by 672 calories. However, you may drink these beverages because you crave the flavor and/or caffeine they provide. In that case, you should moderate and make substitutions to reduce the caloric impact of our chosen beverages. Purchase a small latte with low-fat or non-fat milk, choose a diet cola, or add a couple lemon or orange slices to our water to add flavor.

Regardless of how you address your water needs, you must be intentional about consuming adequate amounts of drinking water each day. Here are some more ideas to help you:

Keep your water balance at an adequate level by carrying a water bottle with you at work or home. Keep the water cool to make it more appealing. Add a slice of lemon or lime or powdered sugar free flavoring to jazz up the flavor a bit. Choose water over sugar-sweetened beverages. The added benefits of water include 1) it has no calories and 2) it usually costs nothing when you are dining out.

Community members are now signing up in the Walk Kansas 2019 program sponsored by Geary County K-State Research and Extension that runs from March 17 thru May 11 this spring. This program promotes physical activity, a healthy balance of fruits and vegetables in the diet, and drinking adequate amounts of water daily. Participants will literally take steps to improve their quality of life and promote well-being in the community. I applaud their efforts! It is not too late to gather up a team of six to join them for your own healthful benefits. If you want more information about Walk Kansas 2019 or your own healthy living choices and challenges, check out our website at <http://www.geary.ksu.edu> or feel free to contact me at the Geary County Extension office (785) 238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!

(Source: www.cdc.gov)

