

The York University Staff Association Health and Wellness News and Views

Ah, summer... a time of baseball tournaments, golf and long days at the lake. But, it's also a time when the weather can present challenges. As people work outside or simply relax and enjoy the warm sun they might not even notice the toll summer is taking on their body. Not staying adequately hydrated is a common problem. We usually think of dehydration as related to physical exertion, heat, stress or illness, but you can get seriously dehydrated without any real effort, especially in the summer months. We lose about three litres of water each day through perspiration, urine, and respiration, which is why your body's stores must be continually replenished. Two thirds of the human body is made up of water. That means if a person weighs about 155 pounds, their body contains about 46 litres of water. Almost 70% of this water is inside the body's cells, 20% surrounds the cells, and 10% is in the bloodstream. Dehydration reduces the amount of water in your body. Severe dehydration can lower blood pressure and the amount of oxygen available to your cells, which can eventually lead to very serious health issues. In general it is recommended for people to drink at least 8 glasses of water daily. When the amount of water you intake matches the water you excrete, the body's hydration levels will be well balanced.

We are all aware that many common conditions may cause fluid loss and can eventually lead to dehydration: excessive sweat and exhaustion, heat, fever, vomiting, and diarrhea. However there are several unknown causes for fluid loss. Here are some unexpected causes for dehydration to be aware of in the upcoming summer months.

Among several other negative side effects, stress can also make you dehydrated. There's a name for it, stress dehydration. When our bodies are under stress, our heart rate increases and we breathe more heavily resulting in fluid loss. When you are under stress your adrenal gland also pumps out stress hormones, and if you are constantly under pressure, eventually your adrenals become exhausted. The adrenals are responsible for the production of the aldosterone hormone, which helps regulate the body's fluid levels and electrolytes. As adrenal fatigue progresses, your body's production of aldosterone drops, triggering dehydration and low electrolyte levels. Experts stress that while increasing fluid intake can help in the short term, it is important to mediate your stressors to attain a long term solution.

Many of us are not aware that not only are carbs your body's main energy source, but without adequate amounts you'll feel exhausted and put your health at risk. Carbohydrates are stored in your body right along with fluids. That's why you drop a couple of pounds of water

weight when you eliminate carbs from your diet. Might look good on the scale, however it's bad news for your hydration levels. For every gram of carbohydrate you take into the body, you'll store four grams of water. As an added bonus, several whole carbs soak up extra water during the cooking process, therefore eating them can increase your hydration levels. Cut them from your diet and you could be unwittingly reducing your body's water levels.

Antihistamines and decongestants both work by dehydration the cells and can have a profound effect on the body's hydration levels. Although they may make you feel better, these medications can often merely mask the problem and often compound the ill effects over time. Be sure to drink plenty of water when taking these medications.

Air conditioning can cause skin and eyes to lose water. The loss of water could result in dehydration. Ever notice how much an air conditioner drips while it is working? The relative humidity drops 50-70% as the air is cooled. When outside air circulates through an air conditioner moisture is lost and the amount of water vapor in the air decreases. The good news is that a few simple steps can prevent summer air conditioner dehydration. Crack a window – especially in the bathroom – to let fresh outside air in. Having several house plants not only adds to the quality of air in the home but will also increase the amount of humidity in the air. If the room is too dry, set out a few bowls of water, allowing water to naturally evaporate into the air.

Prevention is really the most important treatment for dehydration. **Drink water instead of other fluids.** I believe the primary reason so many people are dehydrated is because we have been enticed to drink other fluids (especially the sweet ones) instead of water. Nothing replaces water in the body!!! Consuming plenty of foods that have high water content (such as fruits and vegetables) should be enough for most people to prevent dehydration. People should be cautious about doing activities during extreme heat or the hottest part of the day, and all persons who are exercising should make replenishing fluids a priority.



Summer, hair gets lighter, skin gets darker, water gets warmer, drinks get colder, music gets louder, nights get longer. Enjoy every moment!

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