

# The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness

## News & Views

Ah, summer... There's a lot to do when the weather is right, family picnics, working on your tan at the beach, a homerun derby on the baseball field, endless hours on the golf course, cottage getaways, or lounging in your backyard hammock. Unfortunately, too much fun in the sun can be dangerous. 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. So, before you turn into a raisin, make the most of your summer by taking some simple precautions that can help maintain your health as well as keep you active throughout the season.

Let's get the science over with. Regardless of the season 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. 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. Studies show that almost 75 percent of Canadians fail to meet their daily fluid intake, which can result in chronic dehydration. This condition can be blamed for many common ailments like, constipation, kidney stones, liver issues, weight gain, blood pressures problems, joint and muscle damage, premature aging and gastritis or stomach ulcers to name a few.

Thirst isn't always a reliable early indicator of the body's need for water. Therefore, it is easy to miss the signs of dehydration. Some of the more common symptoms are, dry mouth, fatigue and/or sleepiness, headache, cramps, decreased or darker urine, and/or feeling faint or dizzy. More unusual signs of dehydration are, Fevers and chills, especially dangerous if the fever is over 101 F, insomnia, craving sweet and/or salty foods can signal that your body needs more fluids, and bad breath. If you're not producing enough saliva, sometimes bacteria overgrowth can occur, which can signal chronic dehydration.

Oddly enough, 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.

Quick tip - Pinch a fold of skin together on the back of your hand, if it doesn't flatten back out within a few seconds, you are most likely dehydrated.



Prevention is really the most important treatment for dehydration. No matter how much you avoid it, you're bound to lose some amount of fluid through sweating during summer. Choose water instead of other fluids. I believe one of the reasons so many people are dehydrated is because we have been enticed to drink other fluids (especially the sweet ones) instead of water. Pop, iced tea, coffee, and other drinks that contain caffeine are second best to good old-fashioned water when you're trying to stay hydrated. They act as diuretics, so even if you're getting water, you're also pulling a little extra fluid from your body because of the caffeine. Also consuming plenty of foods that have high water content (such as fruits and vegetables) should be enough for most people to prevent dehydration. 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. Keep in mind that, fluid requirements vary from person to person depending on factors like height, weight, physical activity and the type of region you live in. While you can usually reverse mild to moderate dehydration by drinking more fluids, severe dehydration needs immediate medical treatment.

Remembering to drink it isn't always easy. Sure, it's easy enough to sip water with meals, which is a great start, but hydrating throughout the day is important too. Especially as the weather heats up. Make a habit out of carrying a refillable water bottle with you at all times, in the car, at work, traveling, etc. Keep a pitcher or glass of water handy at home, on the counter or in the fridge. Add some fresh lemon, cucumber or mint, and make a habit of taking several sips every time you pass by. Have a contest with yourself, coworkers, or other family members to see if you can drink your 8 to 10 glasses of water a day.

No matter what your plans are this summer, you won't want to miss any of them. Combating the toll of the heat and sun on your body will keep you healthy and active all summer long.

Every Summer has its own story. Enjoy every moment.

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