

### No Excuses on Hydration

With summer heat, plenty of liquids are more important than ever. Even if you're not out working in the garden or running marathons, getting enough to drink is essential. Your brain and muscles should both be 75% water. If there's not enough water in your brain, it won't work right. Your memory gets fuzzy. You stumble on your words. If your muscles don't have enough water, they won't hold you up. Your feet stumble as you walk. Your arms feel weak. All your organs need plenty of fluids to do their job keeping you healthy.

The trick has been getting as much as you need, if the flavor that you preferred was coffee. For years we've been told that the only kind of fluid that 'counts' is water or something with no caffeine. The thought was that caffeine was a diuretic, and that it made us lose more liquid than we drank. Fortunately, that's not the case any more.

Several studies have shown that people who mainly drink coffee or sodas with caffeine, have just as much water in their tissues as people who only drink caffeine-free beverages. Elderly, adults or athletes, all have been tested. All the tests found the same thing - caffeine was not enough to dehydrate the drinkers. You might go to the bathroom a little sooner than you would otherwise, but you won't lose any more water.

For most of us, a bigger problem is probably all the extra calories we get from drinking regular sodas, adding sugar to our coffee, or ordering large-size lattes from the gourmet coffee shop. Some estimates are that we get over a third of our calories from what we drink. That can be a problem when we have more calories and more weight

than we need.

If your weight is a little more than it should be, stick to the sugar-free beverages. They can be water, diet sodas, calorie-free flavored soda water, tea or plain old black coffee. Have 2 or 3 glasses of skim milk a day, and not more than 1 glass of fruit juice. These last two add calories, but plenty of other nutrients as well.

So, drink when you're thirsty. For healthy adults, that's really all we need to do. If you're over 65, you're less likely to notice when you're thirsty. It would be a good idea to keep a glass or bottle of water, a cup of coffee or tea, or some other drink, in each room in your home. They'll remind you, every time you go into a new room, to take a drink. Good hydration is important, and easier than ever.