

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

January 6, 2010

BY: Annie Williams

Dietetic Intern

James A. Haley Veterans Hospital

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776

e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu

Drink Up

Did you have a drink, or more, for New Year's? Was it water? Probably not! Most of us have heard we are supposed to drink 8 glasses of water per day. But do we know why? Water is essential for every part of life. When we do not have enough water we can get dehydrated. Dehydration can be much more serious than it may sound on the surface.

Our bodies are made up of about 70% water. Our brains are 90% water and our blood is 83% water. Muscle is 75% water and bone is 22% water. Chemical reactions that keep us living take place in the water in our bodies. Water helps transport food and oxygen through our body. Water moves sugar to our brain. Without water we can get confused. Our memory suffers. The brain can't keep the rest of our body working right. Water helps process the foods we eat. It also cushions and protects our tissues, organs, and joints. Water helps regulate our body temperature. This way we are not too hot or too cold. Our bodies produce a lot of wastes. Water helps clear these wastes and toxins from our system.

We lose water from our bodies every minute of every day. Not only do we lose water when we urinate, but we also lose water when we have a bowel movement. Water is also lost when we sweat and when we breathe. Because we are losing so much water, we must replace these losses.

If we find drinking plain water boring, we can also eat foods that have lots of water in them. Some of these are fruits, vegetables, jello, and broth based soups. We can drink caffeine free and alcohol free drinks. These will help keep us well hydrated.

Aside from drinking too little water, we may get dehydrated when sick. If we are throwing up, have diarrhea, have a fever, lots of sweating, or have blood loss, we may be losing more water than we are taking in. It is very important to drink water even if not eating when we are feeling sick. When we exercise, it is common to sweat a lot. Because we are losing water by sweating, it is very important to drink extra water after exercise. A good rule of thumb is to drink an extra glass of water for every 15 minutes of exercise.

Bad things can happen when we do not get enough water. We can survive much, much longer without food than without water. When we get dehydrated, we do not have enough water in our blood. That lack of water in the blood can cause low blood pressure. When blood pressure is too low, the heart has to beat much faster than normal. It has to beat faster to pump the smaller amount of blood through the body. A heart that beats too fast is doing too much work. This is bad for heart health. Also, if a person does not have enough blood flowing to his kidney, his kidney may begin to shut down. These are very serious problems that can be avoided by drinking more water.

A tell-tale sign of dehydration is dark yellow or orange colored urine. If our urine is clear or pale yellow that shows we are getting enough water. If we are dehydrated we may have dry skin, dry and cracked lips, headaches, constipation,

muscle cramps, or be unable to make much urine. When we are thirsty, we need more water. However, the signal for thirst is late to respond. We often need more water before our body realizes it is thirsty. If we lose more than 1 pound per day that usually means we are dehydrated (this can easily happen when you're sick).

Here are some tips to help us drink water throughout the day: have a glass of water when we wake up, have a glass of water at each meal, carry a water bottle throughout the day, and flavor our water with fruits and vegetables if we become tired of plain water. Here is an easy but tasty recipe to encourage us to drink more water. The fancy name just means 'Fresh Water', impress your friends with it!

Cucumber Melon Aguas Frescas

1 large cucumber, sliced

¼ honeydew melon, cubed

¼ cantaloupe, cubed

One half gallon of water

Place melon and cucumber in a glass pitcher and add water. Allow to rest, refrigerated, for two hours and then serve over ice. Garnish with melon balls skewered on a swizzle stick. Serves 8.

For a variety, try substituting the melon for other fruits such as orange, lemon, lime, watermelon, berries, mango, and pineapple.