

# TO YOUR HEALTH

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## DRINK TO YOUR HEALTH

by Barbara Chenoweth, NP

As the weather gets warmer and summer approaches, drinking enough fluid takes center stage. But what's enough? Contrary to popular belief, you don't need to drink eight 8-oz. glasses of water per day!! In fact, researchers at Tufts University have devised a food pyramid for older people that recommends at least eight 6-oz. servings (48 oz.) of *any liquid* per day, (*John Hopkins Health After 50*, January 2007).

However, perhaps an even larger problem for people as they grow older is the decline in thirst. The sensation of thirst lets us know that we need to drink fluids. Because of diminished thirst, older people tend to become more easily dehydrated than younger people. The tendency to develop dehydration also is linked with age-related diseases such as kidney disease, diabetes and thyroid disorders. These conditions can cause the body to excrete more water, increasing the risk of dehydration.

Certain medicines can lead to dehydration:

- Blood pressure medicines such as diuretics (HCTZ) and ACE inhibitors (Lisinopril)
- Cholinesterase inhibitors (Aricept), used to treat Alzheimer's and other dementias
- Medicines used to treat some emotional disorders (antipsychotics)

In addition to dehydration, not drinking enough fluid can lead to other health problems including constipation, urinary tract infections, kidney failure, balance problems and falls, and slower healing from wounds, ulcers and orthopedic injuries.

In rare cases, some people with heart, kid-

ney or liver disease can become *overhydrated!* This can happen if the kidneys become unable to excrete water normally. When this occurs, it may be necessary to *limit or restrict* the amount of fluid that is consumed. Fortunately, most of us have the opposite, more easily solved problem: not drinking enough.

Even if we normally take in adequate fluids, there are special situations when taking extra fluids, more than the recommended 48 oz., is needed to prevent dehydration. In the following circumstances, more fluid is required:

- *Hot weather* — the natural loss of fluid in the heat requires replenishing.
- *Exercising* — for an hour of light to moderate exercise, 2-3 cups of fluid are recommended for re-hydration.
- *Constipation* — fluids increase the moisture in the large bowel that helps the body to eliminate waste.
- *Tendency to develop urinary tract infections or kidney stones* — fluids have been found to be an excellent preventive measure.
- *Illness* — any condition that causes a fever, nausea & vomiting, or diarrhea can quickly lead to dehydration.

Look for the early warning signs of dehydration so that additional fluids can be taken before more serious dehydration develops. Signals of early dehydration include urinating less and noticing that the urine is a dark color of yellow. Normally urine is straw colored. Feeling thirsty is an important sign for older people. Other warning signs include dry mouth, decreased saliva, dizziness, sunken eyes, rapid pulse and loss of skin elasticity, (*John Hopkins Health After 50*, 1/07).



Most any fluid, from any source, can prevent dehydration. In addition to water, fruit and vegetable juices, low-salt soups, milk and even caffeinated coffee and tea, in modest amounts, are sources of fluid. In moderation, beer, wine and mixed alcoholic drinks contain large amounts of water and can be included in the fluid count. With one exception: straight, hard alcohol is very dehydrating and should be avoided. As a reminder, "in moderation" means *one drink* (6 oz. glass of wine, 1 beer, or 1 oz. hard alcohol) *for women* and *two drinks for men* per day.

**Food does count!** In fact approximately 20% of our fluid intake comes from food. Many foods, especially fruits and vegetables such as watermelon, berries, grapes, peaches, tomatoes and lettuce, are almost 100% water. Even meat has a large amount of fluid. Nonetheless, it may be wise to consider food a bonus and still concentrate on the recommended 48 oz./day as a goal. And more in hot weather!

One of the best ways to enjoy summer is to be secure in knowing how to prevent dehydration: Bring on the hot weather!

#### INTERESTED IN LOSING WEIGHT?

If there are enough Residents interested in Weight Watchers, a group can be offered at CWV. Please call Cherie Asgeirsson at Ext. 1102 if you would like more information

#### COMING ATTRACTION

*"Good Bugs, Bad Bugs: Protecting Your Immune System through Nutrition"* is the topic for the health education program on Wednesday, June 18 in Auditorium Center at 10:30AM. Cherie Asgeirsson, CWV nutritionist, will be the speaker. Please join us.

#### NECK DEEP IN WATER

by Muire Lindahl

In the 1960s, as we were preparing to put man into space, the physiology of immersion in water was studied extensively, because the weight of the body when immersed in water is so similar to weightlessness in space. However, this information was published first in scientific physiology journals rather than in the medical literature.

The research of Bruce E. Becker, M.D. done at the National Aquatic Sports Medicine Institute at Washington State University has begun to establish medical applications. His findings were published in an article titled "Water" in *Aquatics International*, June 2007.

According to Dr. Becker, there are 7 benefits of immersion:

- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces stress hormones
- Strengthens the muscles of respiration
- Enhances cardiovascular efficiency
- Improves kidney function
- Increases blood circulation to muscles
- Reduces stress to joints

Immersion in warm water up to the neck causes compression of the tissues. Compression pushes blood deep into the vessels increasing the amount of blood pumped out of the heart per beat thus improving circulation. The result is that the heart is working more efficiently with less demand placed on it. For those who have difficulty moving on land, immersion can provide great benefits with little effort. When effort is added by performing movement, the benefits continue to increase.

It is truly worthwhile to explore these healing waters and experience the world of weightlessness.