

TO YOUR HEALTH

Carleton-Willard Village Out-Patient Clinic - 100 Old Billerica Rd., Bedford, MA 01730

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SUMMER COOL DOWN

by Barbara Chenoweth, NP

Even though we've heard it before, every summer people tend to forget how easily they can become dehydrated. This is especially true for older people who do not feel thirsty even as dehydration is setting in. Nor do they feel the heat or sweat as they used to. The consequences of not drinking enough fluid can be serious. It can lead to balance problems and falls, orthopedic injuries, kidney failure, slower wound healing and constipation.

For those with kidney disease, diabetes or thyroid disorders, there is a higher risk of dehydration, because these conditions can cause the body to excrete more water. On the other hand, some people with heart, kidney or liver disease may be more likely to become over-hydrated because their kidneys do not excrete normally. They may need to restrict the amount that they drink and lower their salt intake (*Health After 50*, Johns Hopkins, March 2012). The subject of fluids and dehydration is complicated!



An additional complication is medicine. Some medicines make people more prone to dehydration. These include medicines for high blood pressure such as diuretics (HCTZ) and ACE inhibitors like Lisinopril. Even medicines used to treat memory loss like Aricept can contribute to dehydration.

Staying aware of our habits and our body's warning signals can prevent risky dehydration:

- The color of urine: is it a dark yellow instead of its normal straw color?
- Dry mouth and decreased salivation
- Dizziness
- Sunken eyes
- Rapid heart rate or pulse
- Loss of skin elasticity



To prevent dehydration, drinking enough fluid is the most important habit to develop during the summer. Generally, this means 6 to 8 glasses of fluid, 8 ounces each. More is necessary if a person is outside, and even more, if a person is exercising outside on a hot day. Any fluid works but some are better than others.

Despite the widely-carried water bottle, many people do not like water. Tea drinking is a good habit to cultivate in the summer. Ice teas of regular black, green or herbal tea not only quench thirst but may have an added benefit, over time, of lowering the blood pressure (*Tufts University Health Letter*, April 2012). However, soft drinks, sugar-sweetened and diet, are linked with coronary artery disease and are associated with higher risk of stroke, especially for women (*Harvard Heart Letter*, June 2012). They do not quench thirst and often cause craving for more.



More healthy choices include fruits and



vegetables, many of which are almost 100% water. Besides being a water source, berries may improve our memory. Cranberry juice may hydrate as well as prevent urinary tract infections. While pomegranate juice promises to treat prostate cancer, slow down changes in the coronary arteries, and improve erectile dysfunction, the jury is still out (*Nutrition Action Healthletter*, March 2012). But it definitely prevents and treats dehydration!

Using fruit to make a smoothie is another nutritious way to hydrate. Classic smoothies add berries and fruit to yogurt and juice. Newer recipes use combinations of berries and other fruits with greens such as kale. A green smoothie!



Although shaky from a research angle, coconut water has become a popular fluid. It's the thin liquid inside young green coconuts, not to be confused with thicker and creamier coconut milk. It does provide a lot of potassium (550 mg/8 ounces) along with other electrolytes—sodium, magnesium, calcium and phosphate. Some brands have more nutrients added as well as sugars and/or fruit puree. Pure coconut water is mildly sweet,



fat-free and low in calories. There is no data to support its claims to control diabetes, fight viruses, treat kidney stones, smooth the skin, stop dandruff or prevent cancer

(*Berkeley Wellness Letter*, University of California, March 2012). Unless a person works out intensely for over an hour, sports drinks are unnecessary, and water works just as well...and is a lot cheaper.

Summertime may be the ideal time to try some of these new fluid options. Staying cool and hydrated are necessary health practices...don't be a heat casualty! Drink extra fluid, keep the air-conditioning on and enjoy the summer!

CLINIC COMINGS AND GOINGS

The Clinic regrets to announce that Jenna Camilleri, our Clinic Coordinator, will be leaving the Clinic. We appreciate all that she has done for the Clinic and will miss her amazing computer skills and her youthful energy! We all wish her the very best in her new position in Fitness!

We welcome Michelle Scott, our new Clinic Coordinator, who comes to us with strong recommendations and people skills. We look forward to working with Michelle and hope that everyone will stop by to meet her.

BEDFORD DRUG PICK-UP

The Bedford Police will pick-up expired and unused medications on:

Friday, August 8, 2014

You can drop off any prescription or over-the-counter unused/expired medication at the Clinic between 8:30 am and 12 noon on Friday, August 8th. Unfortunately, we can only accept the medicines during these times and on the date of pick-up.