

Webinar 5 Handout: **BEST WAYS TO STAY HYDRATED**

We've all heard the rule "8 glasses of water a day" but most health professionals know the magic number 8 has been thoroughly and completely debunked by kidney researchers at Dartmouth Medical School -- some people can still be healthy with much less. Still, it's not a bad mantra to live by and I often give my clients the goal of 8 glasses a day as it's pretty easy to remember and it is adequate for most people. But this doesn't mean they have to chug down 64 ounces of pure water a day. Though water is the best and most hydrating drink for your body, there are plenty of other ways to incorporate fluids into your diet to get the proper hydration you need. Read on for the why's, how's and what's when it comes to fluids and proper hydration and tips for helping your clients meet their daily fluid needs.

Why Water

Water makes up 50 to 60% of your body weight and every system in your body depends on water to function. Two-thirds of the water in the body is within cells and about one-third is outside of cells as extracellular fluid, circulating in blood, between cells and inside organs. You need water to make everything in your body happen, including proper nutrition. Water flushes toxins and waste out of organs, helps carry oxygen and nutrients to cells and provides a healthy environment for tissues.

Every day you lose water through your breath, perspiration, urine, and bowel movements, which is why you have to keep replenishing your water supply. We can control our fluid levels in several ways, including what and how much we drink and eat. Not getting enough water leads to dehydration, a dangerous state for your body to be in. During periods of dehydration your body can't carry out normal functions and begins to feel tired and drained. Prolonged dehydration can even have life-threatening consequences. It's important to not wait for your body to tell you it's thirsty, because it may be too late!

While there are so many different kinds of beverages on the market that promise to quench your thirst and keep you hydrated, the only thing you should drink like water *is* water. Plain water is really best. If clients just aren't water drinkers yet, suggest getting water in by sipping on room temperature water through a straw. If they need a little more excitement, suggest seltzer or adding lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit or cucumbers to water for a little infusion without the artificial baggage (sweeteners, chemicals and preservatives) that comes with most flavored waters sold in stores.

Hydration and Weight

Drinking water doesn't just help people lose weight faster, it helps them keep it off longer. Researchers in one study found that obese people who drank 2 cups of water before each meal over a 3-month period lost 5 pounds more than those who didn't. And a year later, the water drinkers had kept more of that weight off. There are several other studies backing this 2-cup strategy. Research has also shown that drinking water actually raises our metabolic rate a bit. In one study, the subjects' metabolic rates --the rate at which they burn calories -- grew 30 percent for both men and women, within 10 minutes of drinking about 17 ounces (just over 2 cups) of water. The gain maxed out after about 30 to 40 minutes.

And, all studies aside, years of practice have shown me that the common sense of this trumps research, anyway: If you have a glass of water when you think you're hungry, very often, the urge to snack goes away. It's as though a lifetime of overeating and poor snacking has messed up our hunger/thirst signals.

Sports Drinks

For the recreational exerciser who isn't, say, Usain Bolt or Serena Williams, and runs about 15-25 miles per week or does a few cardio classes, dietary needs aren't much different from the average person. There's no need to eat or take in calories during exercise lasting less than 1 hour - this includes calories from sports drinks. While sports drinks do provide plenty of electrolytes that can be lost through sweat when you exercise, they can also add calories that you just don't need in the form of sugar. After 1 hour - IF you are training heavily -- that's when you can reach for a sports drink to get the benefit of electrolytes plus some calories to keep your body running. Even better, grab some water and a banana. Research shows this combo offers the same benefit as sugary sports drinks. Help clients understand that most of what they see is just product marketing and they really don't need to depend on sports drinks.

Foods and Drinks That Hydrate

There are lots of other ways to get your fluid in than just plain old H₂O. Lots of foods are packed with water and there are also other healthy beverages that can count towards your daily dose of fluid. Most fruits and vegetables have extremely high water content - some can be up to 96% water! When eaten raw (water is lost during cooking - that's why they shrivel up), these colorful foods not only deliver a whole mix of important nutrients but the fluid you need to stay hydrated. Here are

some sweet, tangy, crunchy, and delicious foods and drinks to include in your clients' diets that all count towards daily water needs.

- **Cantaloupe and melon** are refreshingly sweet sources of vitamin A and 90% water by weight.
- **Celery** has potassium, calcium and fiber as well as 95% water content.
- **Coffee**, yes coffee, can be a smart beverage choice. Though you do need to watch your caffeine intake (discussed below), coffee has been linked to an increasing number of potential health benefits, including protection against liver and colon cancer, type 2 diabetes, and Parkinson's disease. It's also the leading source of antioxidants for most Americans. But overdoing it isn't a good idea: moderate caffeine intake isn't likely to cause harm, but too much—more than 500 to 600 mg per day—is likely to cause disrupted sleep patterns, nervousness, restlessness, irritability, stomach upset, rapid heartbeat and muscle tremors. And by coffee, we don't mean frappuccinos or other coffeehouse sugar bombs. Drink it black or with a splash of organic milk or unsweetened milk alternative.
- **Cucumbers** are a whopping 96% water and have three awesome phytonutrients called cucurbitacins, lignans, and flavonoids that have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and anti-cancer benefits. They don't say "cool as a cucumber" for nothing!
- **Grapefruit** is tart, tangy, and a refreshing 91% water. It also contains powerful phytonutrients called limonoids which form enzymes that spark a reaction in the liver that helps to make toxic compounds more water soluble for excretion from the body.
- **Iceberg lettuce** may be lacking in the nutrient department compared to darker leafy greens like spinach, but it's a great hydrating food as it is 96% water.
- **Milk and dairy alternatives (such as almond, rice, and hemp milks)** are also great ways to get more fluid and nutrition in your day. I used to recommend low fat milk, but I now believe whole milk is the way to go as the fat content helps balance the natural sugars in milk. Work whole milk and unsweetened dairy alternatives into your diet - try them in your morning coffee.
- **Soup** is loaded with water (duh, it's liquid!) and can also be a powerful way to help with weight loss. Researchers have shown that eating high-volume foods like vegetable soup before a meal helps people consume as many as 20 percent fewer calories overall. Vegetable soups can also be packed with vitamins and minerals. But remember, I'm talking about

broth-based vegetable soups, not cream-based soups like chowders or bisques. It's also important to watch sodium content, as many packaged soups are loaded with salt.

- **Strawberries** have loads of fiber, are an antioxidant powerhouse, are packed with vitamin C, and will keep you hydrated at 92% water.
- **Tea** comes in nearly endless varieties - green, white, black, oolong, red, herbal - and they're all great choices. Just be sure to watch caffeine intake (discussed below).
- **Vegetable juices**, especially green juices made with parsley, spinach, kale, celery, carrots, beets, fennel, ginger, and mint, are a great way to get in fluid and a whole lot of nutrition. Home juicing is best, but if you go for the store bought be careful to read the labels—many “green” juices are actually packed with fruit juices that are tasty, but high in calories.
- **Watermelon** got its name for a reason. This hydrating fruit is 92% water and in just 1 serving of watermelon you get about 5 ounces of water - just over half a cup. Watermelon also has a very high level of an amino acid called citrulline, which our body uses to make arginine, another amino acid that's related to vascular health. It's also an excellent source of vitamin C, vitamin A, and the antioxidant lycopene.

What To Limit or Avoid

Just like some foods hydrate, there are also foods that dehydrate your body. And it's no surprise that these tend to be the unhealthy foods that we should steer clear of anyway!

- **Alcohol** is a diuretic - meaning it causes your body to produce more urine - and therefore causes you to become dehydrated. The body sees alcohol as a toxin, so it tries to get rid of it through urination. With excessive urination, the body loses water as well as sodium, potassium and magnesium ions. This lowers the concentration of these ions in the blood which is very dangerous for your health. Drinking moderate amounts of alcohol is fine, possibly even healthy for the body, but too much alcohol will leave you feeling hungover and in need of fluid. The diuretic effect is fairly significant: drinking four 2-ounce shots of liquor can result in the elimination of up to 1 quart of liquid as urine. Hello not-so-happy hour!
- **Caffeine** sometimes gets a bad rap when it comes to hydration. It's a diuretic and can deplete the body of its water. Although recent studies are showing caffeine may not be as bad as was thought in the past, it's still not the best way to get all your daily fluid. I still say

drink coffee and tea for the other health benefits, but limit your intake to moderate amounts - about 1-2 mugs per day.

- **Fruit juices** are okay to drink sometimes, but they're usually high in sugar and calories and lack the fiber found in whole fruit. In fact, juice is such a big problem that pediatricians have targeted it as a leading culprit in the childhood obesity epidemic, and ask parents to carefully limit it. It's alright to have a small glass of oj in the morning or some pure pomegranate juice during the day--you won't get any fiber, but you'll still get the nutrients and antioxidants in the juice--but keep the serving to 6 ounces or so and then switch over to H2O. You could also try flavoring water with a splash of pure juice.
- **Soda** is just never a smart choice and certainly not a good way to keep hydrated. Regular soda is packed with empty, sugary calories, and diet soda is filled with artificial sweeteners that have tons of negative health effects. Plus, both are laden with chemicals and preservatives. Always say no!