



Dehydration is linked to many ills

Don't drink water just because it's hot out. Do it because just about everything that goes on in your body is dependent on proper hydration. Researchers are even finding that adequate hydration might help prevent a number of chronic diseases.

In November the world's top hydration scientists met at the Nestle Hydration Symposium in Switzerland to explore issues related to water functions, water requirements and how to stay adequately hydrated to prevent disease.

As the most plentiful nutrient in the body, water has too many functions to list here. The most basic are the delivery of essential nutrients to cells throughout the body and the transport and disposal of waste products and toxins. Water is also essential to regulate body temperature and cell structure and function. Even memory can be impaired if brain cells are inadequately hy-

drated.

Question: Which health conditions are related to hydration?

Answer: These common conditions are high on the long list: kidney stones, constipation, exercise-induced asthma, urinary tract infections, high blood pressure, fatal coronary heart disease, blood-clot blockage of blood vessels and stroke.

Some researchers have described how mild dehydration can lead to tiredness, decreased alertness, headaches and slower reaction time. A reduction in body water equivalent to just 2 percent of body weight was shown to adversely affect math skills, short-term memory, attention span and hand-eye coordination, even in healthy young males.

Q: Is thirst a reliable guide to water needs?

A: No. Thirst is a physiological alarm system that kicks in when water levels are low. The

sensation is too slow when water loss is rapid, as occurs during hot weather and exercise.

Also, as a person ages, the thirst mechanism becomes blunted. Combined with decreased mobility and fear of incontinence, this can become the major factor limiting good health.

Q: How can a person best stay adequately hydrated?

A: Include plenty of foods high in water, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. Drink modest amounts of fluids frequently rather than large amounts now and then. As a rough rule of thumb, urine color should usually be more like lemonade than apple juice.

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