



Water offers best source for nutrients

WHICH ESSENTIAL nutrient would you rank as the most important? By definition, all essential nutrients are needed for life. But water is the nutrient that if removed from the diet would cause death most quickly.

Question: Is it necessary to drink water to meet the need for water?

Answer: Water can be obtained from many sources other than pure water. Americans typically consume most of their water from a variety of beverages, including pure water, soft drinks, coffee, tea, and fruit drinks and juices. Although drinking pure water is a good way to meet some of your water needs, it is certainly possible to get all the water you need from a variety of other beverages along with foods high in water.

Q: What are the best sources of water?

A: A group of nutrition scientists recently produced "Healthy Beverage Guide-

lines" and published a related article in the March edition of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Perhaps the greatest concern of the panel is that most people get about 20 percent of their calories from beverages. Most of those beverage calories are sugar accompanied by few other important nutrients.

Q: What does the Beverage Guidance Panel recommend?

A: The panel ranks pure water at the top of its list of preferred sources of water. Second are unsweetened coffee and tea. Its report cites a number of studies finding potential health benefits associated with both beverages. However, they suggest that coffee be limited to four 8-ounce cups a day and tea be limited to eight cups so that caffeine intake does not exceed 400 milligrams per day.

Low-fat and skim milk and fortified soy beverages are third. These water sources are not low in calories, but they provide a

significant amount of important nutrients along with the calories they contain.

Fourth on the list are non-calorically sweetened beverages such as diet soda, which can substitute for tea and coffee with similar limits for caffeine. The panel suggests a daily limit of about 2 1/2 cans of diet soda per day.

No. 5 is a category that includes caloric beverages with some nutrients such as fruit juices, alcoholic beverages and whole milk.

Rounding out the list are regular sodas, fruit drinks, fruit smoothies and sweetened coffee drinks. The panel considers these all to be too high in calories compared with the nutrients they contain.

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