Our Body of Water

By: MAUREEN M. MCCARTHY, RD

We really are a body of water, made up of at least 50 percent of the liquid. This major nutrient plays a vital role in our temperature control, fluid volume and many metabolic processes. Adequate fluid intake is essential to maintaining optimum hydration and keeping the body in perfect balance.

In contrast, dehydration occurs when loss of body fluids exceeds the amount consumed. Desert dwellers are especially susceptible to this condition, particularly during the summer months when temperatures can reach triple digits and risk of fluid loss increases. The key to preventing dehydration is not only to recognize the signs of the problem, but also to identify your risk factors and fluid needs and learn how to meet them.

The Food and Nutrition Board recommends that water intake should come from both foods and beverages. It is suggested that women consume 2.9 quarts and men consume nearly a gallon of water daily. According to the American Dietetic Association's Complete Food and Nutrition Guide, the average adult loses about two and a half quarts a day through respiration, perspiration and elimination. This delicate fluid balance continually needs to be replenished.

The good news is that in addition to water, fluids such as coffee, tea, juice and soup count in meeting your fluid needs. Foods high in water content can also help prevent dehydration. Reach for the following nutritious foods that are especially high in water content: FOODS SERVINGS WATER CONTENT Lettuce 1/2 cup 95% Watermelon 1/2 cup 92% Broccoli 1/2 cup 91% Grapefruit 1/2 cup 91% Milk 1 cup 89% Orange juice 3/4 cup 88% Carrot 1/2 cup 87% Yogurt 1/2 cup 85% Apple 1 medium 84%

Not sure when you should have a drink? For most healthy people, the Institute of Medicine recommends letting thirst be your guide. However, if you're exercising, don't rely on thirst as a measure. In general, it is best to hydrate the day prior to strenuous exercise and during your workout routine. Producing clear, dilute urine is a good indicator of adequate hydration.

If you are ill or feeling the first signs of a minor illness, start drinking extra water as soon as possible, thus avoiding dehydration and possibly warding off illness. Additional water is also needed in hot or humid weather, and helps lower the body temperature and replaces lost fluids from perspiration.

Remember, you may be at risk for dehydration if you have any of these risk factors: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, diabetes, use of diuretics or laxatives, excessive perspiration, dependence on others to be fed, and advanced age (a risk for lack of thirst recognition and aging kidneys). Be aware of signs of dehydration, which can include increased thirst, dry mouth, headaches, sluggishness, palpitations, confusion, dizziness, cramps, dark urine or decrease in urination. Severe dehydration is serious — it can be a life-threatening condition.

Daily fluid requirements can vary according to gender, exercise regime, age, heat exposure and medical conditions. However, including plenty of fluids and foods high in water content in your diet is an easy daily step in preventing dehydration. Bottoms up!

Photo: Andreas Koessler

CITRUS SALAD WITH BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE
BY CHRIS SIMEONE, CEC EXECUTIVE CHEF

- 2 large red or pink grapefruit, peeled, seeded and sectioned
- 2 navel oranges, peeled, seeded and sectioned
- 4 kiwi fruit, peeled and sliced
- 1 demi-pint fresh raspberries -OR- 1cup fresh strawberries, quartered
- 1/4 cup virgin olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 1 Tablespoon canola oil
- 1 Tablespoon ground cumin
- 1/3 cup fresh orange juice, no pulp
- 3 Tablespoons aged balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon honey
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- Fresh mint to garnish

Arrange grapefruit and oranges in the center of the plate, fanning out to form a circle, alternating each fruit. Place kiwi slices in the center of the citrus circle. Sprinkle raspberries over the kiwi in the center of the plate. Combine the remaining ingredients together, blending thoroughly, and drizzle the desired amount of dressing over fruit. Garnish with fresh mint.

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