

Staying Hydrated

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT DRINKING WATER

by Sandra Yeyati

Maintaining proper hydration is one of the most important measures we can take to benefit our health. “The human body is made up of 55 to 75 percent water, and proper fluid levels are essential for many important body functions, including nutrient and oxygen transportation, temperature regulation, blood pressure stabilization, removal of waste from the body and muscle repair,” says Josh Axe, a Nashville-based clinical nutritionist and doctor of chiropractic and natural medicine. “Drinking enough water allows for healthy digestion and

detoxification, supports hunger control and improves the appearance of your skin, eyes and hair.”

Throughout the day, our bodies expend liquid to perform these vital functions. “Dehydration occurs when you lose more bodily fluids than you consume,” says Axe, the author of *Ancient Remedies* and founder of *DrAxe.com*. “Your body needs water and electrolytes replenished, otherwise you’ll experience symptoms such as dry mouth, thirst, muscle weakness and spasms, headache, dizziness, nausea and fatigue.”

“How we live today is why we’re so much more dehydrated than we were 30 to 50 years ago,” says Dana Cohen, a New York City integrative medicine physician and co-author of *Quench*. “Air conditioning and heating are so drying. Electronics, prescription drugs, processed foods, fluorescent lighting—all these things coming at us and affecting our cells—are sucking the hydration out of our environments and out of us.”

According to Cohen—the risks of day-in-day-out, low-grade dehydration—the kind most of us experience—include constipation, joint pain, stiffness, brain fog and cognition problems. “There’s some evidence that it is also a risk factor for diabetes, Alzheimer’s and certain cancers like colon and kidney cancers,” she adds.

How to Hydrate

Optimum hydration is more nuanced than simply drinking eight to 10 eight-ounce glasses of water a day. It depends on our body size, age, diet and level of physical activity or exposure to hot

temperatures, Axe says. He recommends more fluids for women that are pregnant or breastfeeding, teenagers that are developing quickly and people on medications like antibiotics, diuretics, hormone pills, blood pressure medications and cancer treatments.

Cohen points to a few reliable markers: “We’re meant to urinate every two to three hours throughout the day, and you want the color of your urine to be strong, but not too orange or too brown, which indicates dehydration, and not crystal-clear, because you could be over-hydrating.”

In her book *Quench*, Cohen delineates a five-day plan to optimize hydration.

Start every day with a big glass of water, which can include a squeeze of lemon and a pinch of real salt (pink or sea salt, not processed table salt).

Drink a glass of water before every meal. “For people who are trying to lose weight, a few published studies suggest that this will help them lose five additional pounds over a three-month period when dieting,” she says.

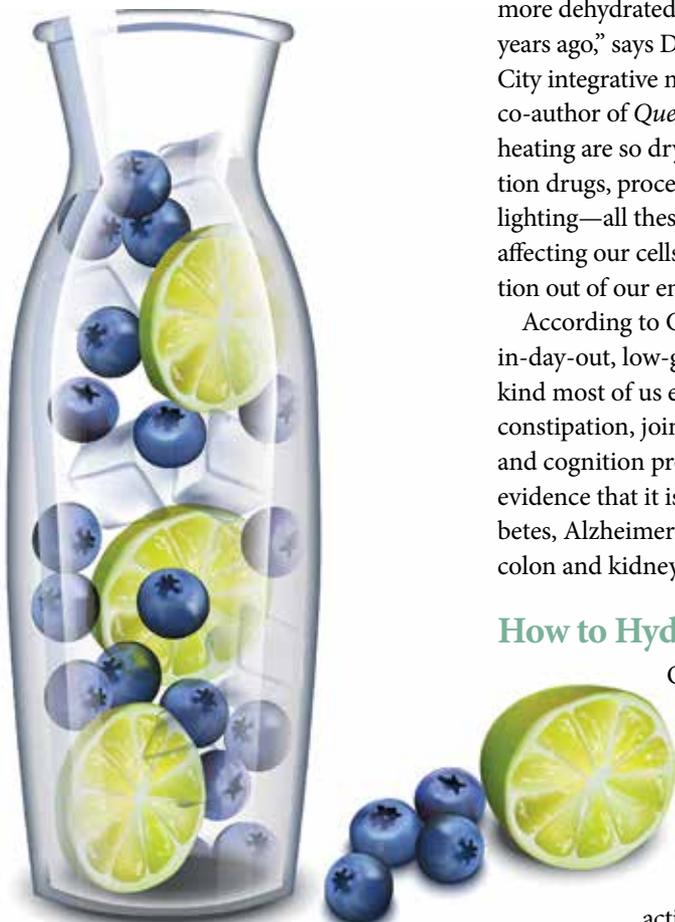
When feeling hungry, drink a glass of water. We often mistake hunger for thirst.

Consume one or two green smoothies a day made with a blend of greens, water and added ingredients to taste. This will incorporate a healthy amount of daily fiber, which helps to absorb and hold on to water.

Add what Cohen calls “micro-movements” throughout the day, such as nodding the head up and down, rotating the wrists and ankles, scrunching fingers and toes or twisting the torso. “These little movements help to move fluid throughout the body and lubricate joints,” she explains.

Hydrating Foods

According to Axe, some foods are naturally hydrating, including coconut water, melons,





tured water by eating plants should be your goal, so your body and your cells are better hydrated.”

Best Fluids to Drink

“The best option is purified water that goes through a filtering process to remove chemical pollutants, bacteria, fungi and algae, but still has beneficial minerals,” Axe says. Both Axe and Cohen recommend the Environmental Working Group’s water filter guide (ewg.org) to find the best at-home system for every budget, as well as its database that lists the safety of tap water in each U.S. zip code.

“The research shows that under four cups of coffee a day is not a diuretic, so it does contribute to your hydration; anything above four cups starts to become a diuretic and goes against you,” Cohen notes, adding that herbal teas are always a great hydrating option with added medicinal properties.

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celery, cucumber, kiwi, citrus fruits, carrots, bell peppers, berries, lettuce, avocado, zucchini and tomatoes.

Cohen recommends one to two table-spoons of chia seeds mixed into a liquid every day. “They’re incredibly hydrating. If you soak chia seeds in water, they

form this gel-like structure on them. Thanks to some fascinating research by Dr. Gerald Pollack from the University of Washington, in Seattle, this gel water, which has different properties from regular H₂O, is believed to store energy like a battery. Getting more of this struc-

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