Is Your Body Dehydrated?

By Dr. Ramona Warren

Next to oxygen, water is the most important substance for our bodies. The body is 75 percent water. Every bodily function is dependent on water. We can go several weeks without food, but only a few days without water. If you have ever failed to water a plant you know how quickly the plant will wither and die. Water is just as essential for the human body as it is for a plant.

According to Dr. Fereydoon Batmanghelidj’s, M.D., author of the book *Your Body’s Many Cries for Water*, most Americans are dehydrated and unaware of it. They avoid water, believing sodas, caffeinated beverages, energy drinks, sports drinks, fruit juices and herbal teas are providing the fluids they need. These liquids, however, have a dehydrating effect on the body. Most of these drinks are loaded with either caffeine or sugar, which are known diuretics. Even herbal teas, while not containing sugar or caffeine, can have a dehydrating effect.

Dr. Batmanghelidj has done extensive research on water’s ability to heal the body of chronic problems. His research has shown a number of conditions associated with chronic dehydration including chronic fatigue, autoimmune disease, diabetes, cancer and even high cholesterol. While these conditions may seem totally unrelated to a lack of water, Dr. Batmanghelidj’s research shows how being dehydrated can lead to these conditions.

During the summer it is especially important to increase your water intake. The following facts and recommendations are compiled from Dr. Batmanghelidj’s book:

* Many health problems are a consequence of dehydration. These problems are the body’s way of signaling that it is thirsty, even though you may not actually feel thirsty.
* Although a dry mouth is the only widely accepted indication of thirst, other earlier signals include: heartburn, colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, joint pain, migraines, hangovers, asthma, allergies, low back pain, chronic fatigue, depression, angina and constipation.
* Pain is a primary signal of thirst. A dry mouth is a late signal.
* Medications, such as antihistamines, anti-inflammatories, antacids, and pain medications like aspirin can kill the signal of dehydration.
* Histamine regulates water in the body. Increased histamine reactions can indicate a need for water.
* The body gets energy from food or water. When the body becomes low in energy it signals for both food and water. We often choose food when water would be the better choice to help increase energy levels.
* We are dehydrated for two main reasons: loss of the sensation of thirst and drinking the wrong drinks. The body will stop asking for water if it gets no response.
* The body will hold on to water because of the ‘drought.’ It will not let go until it is certain the supply is adequate over time.
* Thirst should be satisfied at all times.
* Drink a minimum of 8 to10 glasses of water per day (not juice). This is only four 16- ounce bottles of water. To get your water in, start drinking 16 ounces of water when you first get up in the morning. This simple habit will help you become more aware of drinking water, and you will basically “lubricate” your body to start your day.
* Add a glass of water for every glass of alcohol, coffee, tea or soda you consume.
* Gradually increase your number of glasses. Be sure urination is increasing as you increase water consumption.
* Do not try to correct dehydration by over consuming. Drink eight glasses faithfully each day and, gradually, you will correct the problem.
* It is important to consume daily ¼-teaspoon of unrefined salt (e.g. Celtic Sea Salt) for every five glasses of water. Put ¼-teaspoon in one quart of water per day.
* Excessive urination at night often indicates dehydration. Excessive thirst often indicates a lack of salt.

Please make sure to stay well hydrated this summer, and throughout your life. This one simple thing can go a long way toward improving your health.