

## *Do You Really Need Water?*

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As a pharmacist, when I counsel patients about their medications, I usually ask how much water they drink. Answers are often alarming.

Our bodies are composed of about 80 percent water; so constant water replenishment is necessary to enable the body to function optimally. Yet, quite often I hear:

\* "I don't drink a lot of water. It's not all that necessary."

\* "I don't like water, it makes me nauseous."

\* "I never drink water. I drink tea, coffee and soda instead."

Or, I am told just the opposite.

\* "I drink tons of water." Sometimes "tons of water" means less than 3-4 glasses a day.

While adults seem more likely to dislike water, young people may also have an aversion to it. Recently I filled a prescription for a 15-year-old girl for the drug rantidine (trade name Zantac) for her stomach pain.

Aware that stomach pain or dyspepsia often occurs as a result of dehydration, I asked the young woman how much water she drinks. "I don't like water. It makes me sick," she replied.

I can almost guarantee that by the time she's 30, she'll be on her way to looking old and wrinkled—not as a result of sun damage or aging, but because of chronic dehydration. Not only that, she may well have developed more serious health problems. It's impossible to deprive the body of sufficient water and expect to remain healthy.

I can usually tell when someone doesn't drink an adequate amount of water. Telltale signs of chronic dehydration can include offensive breath, pale, pasty and parched skin and an overall withered look.

An elderly woman complained to me of thickened saliva and sores in her mouth. She said she never drinks water because it makes her nauseous. Unfortunately, the woman couldn't see the connection between her dehydration and her thickened saliva. Could other things be causing her problem? Of course, but advanced dehydration appeared to be a culprit.

Water is plentiful, it's inexpensive and you don't need a prescription to get it. If your intake is low or you normally don't drink water, start slowly and gradually build up until you are consuming at least eight glasses a day. If you have a medical problem, consult your doctor about how much water is right for you.

Quality water, free of fluoride and chlorine is important. The benefits of drinking adequate amounts of pure water are often overlooked and underrated even by those who try to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Water rules as nature's wonder drug. Here are some benefits you will derive from adequate water consumption:

\* You will look and feel better.

\* It's a natural appetite suppressant. Cold water seems to work best for this purpose. Try it when you feel hungry, particularly if you ate just a short while ago. You may be pleasantly surprised. Hunger is often hidden thirst.

\* Water helps the body burn stored fat. When water intake is inadequate, fat deposits increase. This is because without enough water the kidneys don't function properly. When they don't work up to capacity, the liver has to take over some of the load. One of the liver's duties is to burn stored fat. If the liver is overloaded with work the kidneys should be doing, it burns less fat and consequently more fat remains stored in the body.

\* Adequate water is a great treatment for water retention. When the body doesn't get enough water it feels endangered and holds on to as much water as it can. This shows up as swollen ankles, legs and hands. Prescription diuretics offer a temporary solution, forcing out stored water and taking essential nutrients with them. As a result, the body senses a threat to survival and will replace the lost water as quickly as possible. The water retention then starts all over again.

\* The best way to avoid water retention is to give your body plenty of water. Only then will stored water be released. It also helps to avoid excess salt. The more salt you consume the more water your body needs to dilute it. Fortunately, it's easy to get rid of excess salt—just drink more water.

\* Since water is the key to fat metabolism, if you are overweight you need more water than a thin person.

\* Water helps maintain muscle tone by giving muscles their natural ability to contract and by preventing dehydration.

\* Adequate water helps prevent sagging skin after weight loss.

Please don't deprive your body of water Give it the water it needs and wants. It will reward you by helping you stay healthy and youthful longer.

Get in the habit of having water handy, and drinking it often—not sips—full glasses. Even when effects of the sun, time, and heredity have left their calling cards on the face and body as lines and wrinkles, a hydrated individual knows water is a powerful tool to look and feel better, and uses it faithfully to stay healthy, slim, beautiful and ageless.



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