

Dehydration

Water is important to your body at all times, but especially in hot weather. Every system in your body depends on water to function properly. Water also keeps your body from overheating. When you are more active, your muscles generate heat and the main way your body discards heat in warm weather is through sweat. As sweat evaporates, it cools the tissues beneath. Lots of sweating reduces your body's water level, and this loss of fluid affects normal bodily functions. Even mild dehydration can drain your energy and make you tired. The best way to beat dehydration is to drink before you get thirsty. If you wait until after you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated.

Slocum-Dickson recommends following a few simple tips to make sure you stay properly hydrated this summer.

- On an average day you should drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of fluid
- If you're participating in outdoor summer activities, you'll need to drink more. Drink at least 16 to 20 ounces of fluid one to two hours before an outdoor activity. While outside, you should consume 6 to 12 ounces of fluid every 10 to 15 minutes. When you are finished with the activity, you should drink at least another 16 to 24 ounces to replace what you have lost. Exact amounts depend on your individual level of activity.
- Water is all you need if you are planning to be active in a low or moderate intensity activity, such as walking, for an hour or less.
- If you plan to exercise for longer than an hour, or if you anticipate being out in the sun for more than a few hours, you may want to hydrate with a sports drink. These help to replace fluid, sodium, and potassium which are lost through perspiration.

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- Limit fruit juice and fruit drinks. They are too high in carbohydrates, too low in sodium, and may upset the stomach. If you're going to drink fruit juices while exercising, try diluting them with 50% fruit juice and 50% water first.
- Avoid alcoholic and caffeinated beverages, such as coffee, teas, and sodas which tend to pull water from the body and promote dehydration.
- If you're properly hydrated, your urine should be clear, pale or straw-colored. If it's darker than that, keep drinking!
If you suspect that someone is dehydrated, seek immediate medical attention. Signs of dehydration include fatigue, loss of appetite, flushed skin, heat intolerance, light-headedness, dark-colored urine, and a dry cough.