

You Are What You Drink – Part 2

In this article we look at the warning signals your body emits to get your attention to drink more water! We learn how to calculate how much water you need, and look at some handy tips and reminders for healthy drinking!

In Part 1 - we reminded ourselves that our body is composed of 25 percent solid matter and 75 percent water. Brain tissue is 85 percent water. Yet, for many of us we struggle day in and day out with back pain, migraines, high blood pressure and worse often due in part to chronic dehydration.

Let's examine how we become dehydrated

A level of dehydration is hard to avoid, due to the activities of daily living.

- We lose about 3- 4 litres (about 10-15 cups) of fluid a day in sweat, urine, exhaled air and bowel movement
- We lose approximately 1-2 litres of water just from breathing!

As horse owners and riders we need to remember that the most common cause of increased water loss is exercise and sweating (all that mucking out at speed so we can get on with the fun job of riding our horses!). So as a riding instructor/trainer - we must check if our students are hydrated before beginning the lesson and encourage them to take a moment to take some water if they already feel symptoms of dehydration.

Hydration is also a critical factor in being focused and maintaining your concentration – so critical during lessons, and competition days. Being aware of this important aspect of physical and mental performance will provide you with the edge you may need on important days. If you know what the signals are in your body, that you maybe dehydrated, then you can take action quick, and ensure preventative steps are in place going forward.

What are the signs of dehydration?

Here are some simple ways to keep an eye on how your body sends you messages that you may be dehydrated:-

A hydrated body produces clear, colourless urine. A somewhat dehydrated body produces yellow urine. A dehydrated body produces	Dehydration decreases your urine output	Headaches & Migraines
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orange or dark-coloured urine		
Mild dehydration decreases our coordination	Dehydration leaves you with a dry mouth and nose	Back pain
Dehydration increases our sensation of fatigue	Impairs your judgment	Allergies
Dehydration increases dry skin	Feeling stressed	Asthma

Many of us will have heard that we need to drink 2 litres of water a day. Whilst this isn't a hard and fast rule, for most of us it seems to be a sensible starting point. For those of us in physical work, or living in hot climates, or who have a fascination for keeping the body in balance, there is a simple calculation to make to ensure you are drinking sufficient water.

How much water do I need to drink?

To ensure you are drinking enough water:-

Step 1: take your body weight

Step 2: divide your body weight in half

(The answer is the approximate number of water ounces you should drink daily)

Example:

Step 1: you weigh 200 pounds

Step 2: you should drink 100 ounces of water per day (1 centilitre = 0.34 fluid ounces)

If we are physically active or live in hot climates then we will need to drink more.

What should we drink? What shouldn't we drink?

We are designed to drink pure, natural water. Below are some tips to follow:-

- **DONT...** drink sodas/soft drinks to provide your fluid needs. The high sugar content and artificial flavours in soft drinks are harmful to your health

- Tea, coffee, soft drinks contain water, but the diuretics contained in these caffeinated drinks flush water out of your body. Don't count on them to replenish fluid loss.
- **DO...** drink tea, coffee, soft drinks occasionally, but if you drink them constantly and don't drink enough pure natural water, then you are compromising your long-term health.
- **DO...** drink natural pure water is the best choice

Drinking Tips!

The Japanese style of management believes that if you want a person to believe what you are telling them, tell them once, then tell them again 9 more times!

Anyone who has ever began a diet, or tried to stop smoking knows that once you get over the first few days or weeks, the body adjusts, the cravings diminish and you develop new eating / lifestyle habits that support your goal. Create a similar regime in your water consumption and notice how quickly you begin to drink water automatically –like breathing, talking, walking!

- Start your morning's right! Morning is when you are most full of toxins and are dehydrated. Reach for a big glass of water first thing in the morning – even before coffee. This water in the morning really gets the blood flowing
- Drink a glass of water when you get up and another when you go to bed
- Take regular water break breaks during the day
- Avoid relying on sodas to provide your fluid needs
- Drink water before and after food; ideally drink a glass of water half an hour before you eat your meal and half an hour after the meal

You should always drink water prior to eating, and after eating, to support the digestive process. The stomach depends on water to help digest food, and lack of water makes it harder for nutrients to be broken down and used as energy. The liver, which dictates where all nutrients go, also needs water to help convert stored fat into usable energy. If you are dehydrated, the kidneys turn to the liver for backup, diminishing the liver's ability to metabolize stored fat. The resulting reduced blood volume will interfere with your body's ability to remove toxins and supply your cells with adequate nutrients

- Drink water anytime your body feels like it
- Balance your sodium intake with your water consumption. Take 1/4 teaspoon of salt per quart of water - every 4-5 glasses of water. Be sure to get sea salt. The best is Celtic sea salt or Himalayan sea salt, both of which are readily available at any health food store.
- Keep a water bottle by your side at all the times. Use either bottled water or tap water, and carry it with you everywhere, next to the stable, to the gym, in your car, to your office.
- Keep water flowing before, during and after exercise. Drink at least 1 litre of water for every 60 minutes of exercise. Drink more if it's hot. It is recommended that you replenish fluid at least every 20 minutes when exercising heavily.

We all have busy lives. We can all find excuses for not doing something no matter how much it is in our interests to do it!

The irony in not finding the time to drink water, or to remember that we need to be drinking more water, is that once we are hydrated we are so much more productive, have more energy and focus with better memory retention. When it comes to improving our riding performance staying hydrated could be the edge we need. A hydrated body and brain can focus and concentrate; ensures muscles are in good working order; reflexes working and the body in physical balance to support psychological balance.

We can all change the way we drink – by drinking pure, natural water that is good for our health, our pocket book, and our environment. If we want to improve the quality of lifestyle and be more healthy, then make drinking natural water a life habit. It won't take long for you to feel the benefit. If along the way it also helps prevent the ageing process then that sounds like a good free investment!

By Debbie Percy

Source: The Bodies Many Cries for Water by Dr. F. Batmaghelidj