



LESSON 23: "STAYING HYDRATED"

The importance of water

The human brain is made of about 75% water and the average adult human body is 50–65% water (the percentage is even higher in infants, ranging from 75–78% during the first year of life). Water is essential for our survival and optimum health. Here are some of its functions in the human body:

- It forms saliva (which is needed for digestion)
- It keeps the mucousal membranes moist
- It allows the body's cells to grow, reproduce and survive
- It is needed by the brain to manufacture hormones and neurotransmitters
- It regulates body temperature (through sweating and respiration)
- It acts as a shock absorber for the brain and spinal cord
- It helps deliver oxygen all over the body
- It flushes body waste, mainly in urine
- It lubricates joints
- It's the major component of most body parts

Are you dehydrated?

Staying hydrated is incredibly important, but dehydration has become so common that we often either don't recognize or ignore its signs. Some of the symptoms of dehydration include:

- increased thirst (thirst is a sign that you are already dehydrated, so try to make sure you drink enough water as a general rule, not only when you're thirsty)
- feeling overly tired and sleepy (especially when you know you're getting enough sleep)
- decreased urine output
- dark urine (it should be clear like water, the darker your urine, the more dehydrated you are)
- headaches
- dizziness
- dry skin
- dry eyes (which you'll notice even more if you're wearing contact lenses)

- eye twitching

If ignored, dehydration can lead to blood pressure problems, a rapid heart rate, lightheadedness, fever and in the most severe cases, lethargy, seizures and death.

How to make sure you stay hydrated

If you believe that you are currently dehydrated, there are several ways of making sure you stay hydrated:

- start and end your days with water and/or herbal tea
- eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables as they're very high in water content. The more fresh produce you consume, the less extra water you'll need to drink
- Drink 6-8 glasses of water throughout the day (that is the amount that is generally recommended, but it can vary, so be sure to pay close attention to your own body's signs)
- Drink more when you're exercising
- Drink more in warmer climates



Water quality

You can check with your water company to find out whether or not your tap water is safe to drink, but even if it is, safe doesn't always mean that it's the best option there is and unfortunately, a lot of alternatives like bottled water aren't ideal either. Bottled water, if it comes in plastic bottles, is detrimental for the environment (check out the documentary *Tapped* for a closer look into this industry and its consequences). If you have no other choice than to drink bottled water, try to opt for glass bottles and /or other recyclable and BPA-free containers. Longterm, it may be worth investing in a home filter system like reverse osmosis or Tyent.

How to move away from soda and co.

Many people I know are or were at some point practically addicted to soda. I myself drank more diet coke than water for over a decade. I was so hooked on it that plain water seemed boring to me. Soda is essentially caffeinated water with refined sugar and artificial flavoring and/or juice concentrate. It's one of the number one things to avoid when your goal is to adopt healthier eating habits and/or to lose weight. If you're having a hard time removing soda from your diet or replacing it with water, try to create your own, healthy soda at home. A great way to transition away from it is to add lemon juice and ice cubes to sparkling water. You could even mix in a little freshly squeezed orange juice to make it sweeter. It may take a little getting used to, but you'll be surprised to see just how quickly your taste buds can adapt.