



APRIL 2024

## Hot weather and hydration: what you need to know

One of the best ways to stay healthy is to stay hydrated. In fact, it's vital during the summer months when our bodies need more fluids to counteract the warmer temperatures and higher humidity. "In addition to helping the body function properly, water helps regulate body temperature and flush out waste. But most people do not drink enough water. Without sufficient water in your body, your cells get congested, your skin can't detox, and your bladder and kidneys can't work properly. You feel tired and less able to concentrate. People often confuse hunger for thirst causing them to overeat. Drink some water or a beverage like water that is low in calories, sugar, sodium and fat first," explains Karen Kansler, RN, nurse wellness coordinator at MedStar Health.

"Good hydration is especially important if you are active or exercising in the heat. During hot and humid weather, the risk of dehydration and heat-related illnesses, including cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke, is higher. In severe cases, dehydration can be life-threatening. You need to consume water to replace the fluids lost during physical activity," she adds.



Whether you're an avid athlete or just enjoy getting out during the summer months, Kansler offers these general suggestions to ensure you stay hydrated:

- **Drink six to eight 8-ounce glasses of water each day.** You may need more or less based on your age, weight, health and activity level so, if unsure, check with your doctor.
- **Carry a reusable water bottle** with you and drink from it throughout the day, refilling as needed.
- **Drink water during meals.** It will help you stay hydrated and make you feel more full, which can prevent overeating.
- **Not a fan of plain water?** Consider flavoring it with veggies, citrus fruit or a splash of real fruit juice. Try fresh mint with sliced cucumber.
- **Drink water** before, during and after exercise or any physical activity.

"Thirst isn't always a reliable early indicator of the body's need for water. Many people don't feel thirsty until they're already dehydrated. That's why it's so important to increase water intake during hot weather," Kansler notes.

### Signs of Dehydration

- Confusion
- Dark-colored urine
- Dizziness
- Extreme thirst
- Fatigue
- Less frequent urination

Hot summer days are in the near future. If you are experiencing signs of dehydration, please alert your athletic trainer or school nurse.

To learn more about your child's athletic trainer, visit their school's athletic webpage.