

Water: Your Everyday Energy Drink

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O'FALLON - Water does your body good. In fact, it is the best choice for your body.

As we head into the middle of summer, medical providers at Hospital Sisters Health System (HSBS) locations in the region want to remind everyone of the importance of staying well-hydrated.

Kayla Barnes, RD, LD, registered licensed dietitian, said, “Water is a vital nutrient that all people need to survive. It helps maintain physical health and mental acuity, as well as overall appearance. Drinking enough water daily can have a positive effect on your life.”

Benefits of drinking water

About 60% of the body is made up of water. It regulates body temperature, lubricates and cushions joints and protects organs. Cells need water to transport nutrients. Wastes and toxins are flushed out through sweat, urine and bowel movements—all of which require water.

Drinking enough water can also affect mental health. Being well-hydrated provides what a person needs to stay alert, focused and productive throughout their day. All of this is why it's so important to replace the fluids lost during activities.

Are you dehydrated?

Dehydration occurs when a person loses more fluids than they take in. Be sure to increase your fluid intake in hot weather, when you increase your physical activity and when you are sick (especially with vomiting, diarrhea or fever). Additionally, drinking alcohol and caffeinated drinks can also cause you to lose water.

Some common signs of dehydration include:

- Extreme thirst.
- Dry or sticky mouth.
- Less sweat than usual.
- Dark-colored urine or no urine at all.
- Dry skin.
- Digestive problems.
- Headaches or dizziness.

The good news is that symptoms often go away when you rehydrate.

Choose water

Many people reach for beverage options like sports drinks to hydrate during or after high-intensity exercise or activities with their added carbohydrates, minerals and electrolytes. Other popular drinks are regular soda, fruit drinks and energy drinks. However, these also contain sugar, calories or caffeine.

Sugary drinks are the leading source of added sugars in the American diet. People who often drink sugary drinks are more likely to face health problems, such as weight gain, obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cavities, and gout, a type of arthritis.

Barnes shared, “Try reading the nutrition labels on the drinks you are putting in your shopping cart – you might be surprised to see how many added sugars are in some of your choices. Water is a healthy alternative to sugary beverages--100% natural and calorie-free.”

For example, a 12-ounce regular soda has more than 10 teaspoons of added sugar, adding up to 150 calories. Consuming two sodas a day adds up to 2,100 calories in a week.

Barnes recommends the following simple steps to increase your water intake without the added sugar:

- **Carry a refillable water bottle with you.** Set reminders on your phone if you need a nudge to drink throughout the day.
- **Choose water when eating out.** It saves both money and calories.
- **Drink a glass of water before you consume your meal.** Besides helping with hydration, it will help you feel fuller so you will eat less.
- **Mix up your water options.** Try adding fruit slices, like pineapple, watermelon or lemon, or vegetables and herbs, like cucumber or mint. Make flavored ice cubes with 100% fruit juice, unsweetened tea or chopped fruit. Choose seltzer or sparkling water over juices and sugary beverages.
- **Don't forget fluids are in many foods too.** Eating water-rich fruits and vegetables, such as melons and tomatoes, can help you stay hydrated.

Water is often overlooked as a key element to overall health. Just taking a few simple steps can help you stay hydrated and healthy. If you suspect significant dehydration, seek medical attention immediately at a walk-in clinic or an emergency department. HSHS St. Elizabeth's Convenient Care is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and conveniently located within the O'Fallon Medical Building at 1512 N. Green Mount Road in O'Fallon. All care is on a walk-in basis, so no appointment is needed.

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; American Diabetes Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Medline Plus

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About Hospital Sisters Health System

Hospital Sisters Health System's (HSHS) mission is to reveal and embody Christ's healing love for all people through our high quality, Franciscan health care ministry. HSHS provides state-of-the-art health care to our patients and is dedicated to serving all people, especially the most vulnerable, at each of our physician practices and 15 local hospitals in two states - Illinois (Breese, Decatur, Effingham, Greenville, Highland, Litchfield, O'Fallon, Shelbyville and Springfield) and Wisconsin (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Oconto Falls, Sheboygan, and two in Green Bay). HSHS is sponsored by Hospital Sisters Ministries, and [Hospital Sisters of St. Francis](#) is the founding institute.

For more information about HSHS, visit www.hshs.org. For more information about Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, visit www.hospitalsisters.org.

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