



CONTACT:

Susan Harris-Broomfield
Nebraska Extension Educator
Rural Health, Wellness, & Safety
308-832-0645

Dehydration: A Hazard of Summer

So much of our body is dependent upon water. Water makes up much of our brain, muscles, blood, and even a portion of our bones. It moistens the oxygen we breathe and helps to carry nutrients and oxygen to cells. It helps to convert food to energy and regulates our body temperature. It works to remove waste products from our major organs and cushions vital organs and joints. For these reasons, we need to be aware of the dangers of dehydration occurring when the body loses more fluid than it takes in.

As summer temperatures rise, so does our risk of dehydration. Knowing how to prevent this serious condition is an important part of staying safe while experiencing summer heat. While being thirsty is only one indicator of dehydration, other symptoms include fatigue, dizziness, headaches, cramps, decreased urine, and decreased sweat output. In severe cases, dehydration may cause swelling of the brain, seizures, kidney or liver failure, kidney stones, diarrhea, vomiting, fever, inability to keep fluids down, irritability or confusion.

One indication of hydration is the color of urine. Rather than being clear, it needs to be a pale yellow or the color of lemonade. If it is dark yellow or darker than apple juice, more fluid needs to be consumed.

Children don't always recognize that they are dehydrated, especially when they become involved in summer activities. The amount of water a child needs is dependent on age, gender, body weight, weather/temperatures, and how much physical activity they have.

Maintaining proper hydration doesn't have to be boring. Children can rehydrate by consuming water, smoothies, milk or chocolate milk, and 100% fruit or vegetable juices. To encourage children to drink more water, one can add ice, a special straw, or infuse the water with a slice of fruit for sweetness. Other options could be lime slices, herbs such as basil or mint, and vegetables like cucumbers for an added zest. Grapes and cucumbers frozen for 4-5 hours make great natural popsicles. The potassium, sugar, sodium, vitamins, minerals and cancer-fighting antioxidants contained in these beverages also help absorb more fluid.

Our bodies also rehydrate through the consumption of food. Many of the seasonal foods associated with summer are full of water. Foods such as fruits and vegetables like melons, strawberries, tomatoes, and cucumbers are great sources of water.

Stay hydrated with plenty of fluid this summer!

Source: Patricia Luck, SNAP-Ed program Assistant Educator in Dawson County.