



Nutrition News

The Importance of Hydration for Seniors

Summer is a good time to remind everyone of the importance of staying hydrated - especially seniors. Staying hydrated is crucial for your body to maintain its internal balance, help regulate body temperature, prevent infections, and keep organs functioning properly. It is important to know how much water to drink in a day, how to recognize side effects of dehydration, and the role of hydration in preventing COVID-19/coronavirus.

Why should we drink water?

Staying hydrated is particularly important for the elderly because, in general, seniors have less body mass than younger people. This leads to a smaller internal reserve for the water your body needs. Additionally, for those with health problems, many medications make seniors susceptible to dehydration; check this out at your next doctor's visit.

When seniors do not drink enough water, it can lead to problems such as kidney issues, diabetic ketoacidosis, heart failure and brain damage. Because of all this, seniors need to keep note of how much water they are drinking, especially during this, the hottest time of year.

Hydration and Immunity

This summer is different than most with the spread of COVID-19. Although cases have dropped in our region from their peak in April, it is important to remain cautious and do everything possible to prevent the spread of the virus - especially among the elderly who are the most

susceptible to it. Drinking enough water is a simple step to help the body's immunity. Most of your blood is water. Staying hydrated helps blood transport nutrients throughout the body, which in turn strengthens the body's immunity. Water is also crucial for the body's detoxification system which flushes out foreign material and other waste - another means to strengthen immunity.

How can I be sure that I'm staying hydrated?

On average, men over the age of 50 should be getting 13 cups of water a day, and women over the age of 50 should be having nine cups of water a day. You can make this goal easier by incorporating foods such as those listed in the table on the flip side of this page. Another good habit to incorporate is recommended by Mayo Clinic: Have one glass of water with each meal, and one in between each meal. Many beverages can also help in staying hydrated; however, plain water remains superior. More times than not, overly sugary beverages can do more harm than good, contributing to diabetes and obesity.

Side Effects of Dehydration

It is important to be able to recognize side effects of dehydration beforehand, to be able to act on them and prevent potential damage. Many people who become dehydrated are unable to recognize that something's gone awry.

Some of the most common side effects of dehydration are infrequent urination, dark colored urine, fatigue, dizziness and confusion. If any of these symptoms become extreme, a visit to a medical professional may be needed to help the senior replenish fluids and electrolytes.

Turn the page to learn more about the water content of common fruits and vegetables.

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Water Content Range for Selected Foods

Percentage	Food Item
100%	Water
90–99%	Fat-free milk, cantaloupe, strawberries, watermelon, lettuce, cabbage, celery, spinach, pickles, squash (cooked)
80–89%	Fruit juice, yogurt, apples, grapes, oranges, carrots, broccoli (cooked), pears, pineapple
70–79%	Bananas, avocados, cottage cheese, ricotta cheese, potato (baked), corn (cooked), shrimp
60–69%	Pasta, legumes, salmon, ice cream, chicken breast
50–59%	Ground beef, hot dogs, feta cheese, tenderloin steak (cooked)
40–49%	Pizza
30–39%	Cheddar cheese, bagels, bread
20–29%	Pepperoni sausage, cake, biscuits
10–19%	Butter, margarine, raisins
1–9%	Walnuts, peanuts (dry roasted), chocolate chip cookies, crackers, cereals, pretzels, taco shells, peanut butter
0%	Oils, sugars

Source: The USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference

Friends,

While it's recommended that women over 50 drink at least nine cups (72 ounces) of water per day, and men over 50 are recommended for 13 cups (104 ounces) a day, you might like to enjoy your water from a wider variety of sources.

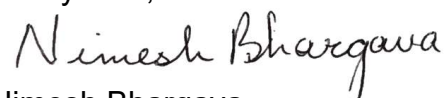
Fortunately, as the above chart indicates, it's easy to “eat your water” to stay healthy *and* hydrated.

For even more variety, here are more foods with water content over 80 percent:

radishes, cucumbers, tomatoes - all over 95 percent
 asparagus, portabella mushrooms, green peppers, grapefruit - all over 90 percent
 peaches, apricots, plums - all over 80 percent

You can find many of these fruits and vegetables at farmers markets throughout Dutchess County. Some markets participate in the state's Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), which provides qualifying seniors with one annual book of five checks worth \$4.00 each, to buy produce at participating markets. If you're interested in SFMNP services, or for a list of participating markets, contact the Office for the Aging at (845) 486-2555 or email ofa@dutchessny.gov.

All my best,



Nimesh Bhargava

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