

Easy Wellness Tips from Dr. Heidi Iratcabal

By Heidi Iratcabal, ND, PhD

With the weather warming up, it is more important than ever to stay well hydrated. In warmer weather, our bodies eliminate toxins at a much higher rate. The more we sweat, the more toxins that are released. As our bodies release that moisture, it is crucial that we replenish it by drinking plenty of water.

Staying well hydrated has many health benefits. In the heat, water helps prevent heat exhaustion, heat stroke and dehydration. An added benefit is that drinking plenty of water can also help with weight loss.

How much water is enough? As a basic rule, we should drink one-half our body weight in ounces of water. Therefore, an individual weighing 150 pounds should drink at least 75 ounces of water each day (roughly nine 8-ounce glasses of water). Every caffeinated beverage should be balanced with an extra glass of water.

Filtered or unfiltered, does it matter? While it is important that we drink plenty of water, the type of water we drink is also very important. Unfiltered water can contain dangerous chemicals and substances such as herbicides and insecticides, chlorine, fluoride, lead and mercury. It can also contain bacteria and viruses, residual pharmaceuticals, as well as human and animal feces.

The Environmental Protection Agency has set maximum contaminant levels for municipal water treatment facilities, but the reality is that the level at which those contaminants becomes harmful to the body may vary from person to person. People with already weakened immune systems, as well as children and the elderly are at a much higher risk of health complications from drinking unfiltered tap water that is contaminated. While some home filtering systems can be expensive, at least a minimal investment in a water-filtering pitcher is highly recommended.

Add fresh-squeezed lemon juice. There are additional health benefits to drinking water flavored with fresh-squeezed organic lemon juice. Lemons are an antiseptic fruit, meaning that they help prevent sepsis and reduce the presence of bacteria. Lemons can also help prevent disease and help our bodies clean out impurities. In addition to reducing the presence of bacteria and eliminating impurities, lemon helps the body's digestive system, reducing heartburn, bloating and even belching. Drinking lemon juice regularly will also help the body eliminate waste. And for those who think drinking water is boring, well, lemons are also a delicious natural flavoring.



Which is better, plastic or glass? Glass containers are by far the best choice for drinking water. Many plastic water bottles are made of polycarbonate, which contains chemicals that are considered endocrine disruptors. These chemicals leach from the plastic, disrupting the normal functions of the body's hormones.

Bisphenol A (BPA) is a chemical that is often used to make polycarbonate plastic and epoxy resins. Epoxy resins are used to coat the interior surface of food and beverage cans, theoretically protecting the food from contamination. However, BPA is also an endocrine disruptor that mimics estrogen, the hormone associated with breast and ovarian cancer. Some studies have shown that BPA in amounts as low as 2-5 parts per billion can have harmful effects on animals. The plastic liners of many canned foods have BPA levels above that range. So, you want to avoid plastic containers as much as possible.

Whole Foods and Starbucks both offer a variety of reusable glass water bottles that come with a protective silicon sleeve, providing both an easy grip and some protection from breakage.

Don't let dehydration get to you this summer. Drink plenty of water. And as you're hydrating, squeeze a lemon or two into your water and remember that they are for more than just flavor.