

By SUSAN BOWERMAN

Creative ways to up fluid intake

DID you just finish a long run, workout session, or yoga class?

Make sure to drink plenty of fluids!

After a hard workout, fluid losses need to be replaced, which is why it's so important to rehydrate.

This is especially true for Malaysians who are currently experiencing prolonged extreme hot weather which can accelerate fluid losses and make it even harder to stay well-hydrated.

Water is vital for the proper function of virtually every cell, tissue, and organ in the body.

Here are a few reasons why hydration is so essential:

- > Water is needed for proper digestion and delivery of nutrients to your cells
- > It helps regulate your body temperature
- > Water also acts as a "shock absorber" for the brain and spinal cord, and it lubricates joints, organs, and tissues
- > Water helps maintain healthy mucous membranes and is a key component of lymphatic fluid, thus supporting the health of your immune system
- > Adequate water intake may even help you manage your weight.

Dehydration signs and symptoms

With the prolonged extreme hot weather, Malaysians are encouraged to stay hydrated to prevent dehydration and other chronic diseases.



No matter what exercise you're doing, stay hydrated by taking sips (not gulps) of water frequently. — Filepic

ing, or if you're running a fever, you need extra fluids.

When you're exercising, it's important to keep your fluid intake up not only during activity but also to make sure that you adequately replace fluid losses once you've



unsweetened option; have some tea with lemon; keep a pitcher in the fridge for a nice icy blast on a warm day.

> Include more watery fruits in your diet.

All fruits and veggies are good, but especially melons, leafy greens and cucumbers.

> Consider having soups before meals; they can help hydrate you and make your meal more filling.

Daily water quota

Your age, size, gender and physical activity level will help determine your water needs, as does the climate.

As a general rule, according to our Health Ministry, Malaysians should take six to eight glasses of plain water per day.

That sounds like a lot, but not all of it needs to come from beverages alone.

About 70-80% should be provided by beverages – and at least half of that from water, with lesser contributions from tea, coffee, milk

When you're not properly hydrated, your body sounds an alarm that shows itself first as thirst and dry mouth.

Signs that you may not be taking in enough fluids might also include:

- > Dark urine
- > Constipation
- > Bad breath
- > Muscle fatigue
- > Headaches

By the time your thirst mechanism kicks in, you're already fairly dehydrated, so it's important to stay on top of your fluid intake during the day.

According to the 2019 National Health and Morbidity Survey, three in four Malaysian adults drink enough plain water every day to keep themselves hydrated.

However, it's also critical to make sure infants and small children get enough fluids as well – a recent meta-analysis indicated that children globally are not consuming enough water to be adequately hydrated.

Dehydration can result from not drinking enough fluids during the day but other circumstances can contribute as well.

If you've had diarrhoea or vomit-

finished.

Some athletes make a habit of weighing themselves before and after activity to see how much fluid needs replacing.

For every kilogramme of weight lost during activity, you need to drink about two to three cups of liquid to replace fluid losses.

More than water

If you are working out intensely, or for longer than 30 minutes or so, or working out in a hot or humid environment, you may need to supply your body with more than just plain water – both during and after exercise.

When you sweat, you not only lose water but important minerals – like sodium, chloride, and potassium – that need to be replaced.

These body salts, often called electrolytes, participate in many body processes but are especially important for the proper function of your nerves, muscles, heart and brain.

Electrolytes can be replaced with specially designed sports drinks that provide not only fluid but the right balance of electrolytes that



A sip of iced tea with lemon on a hot day can be refreshing and beats dehydration. – Herbalife Nutrition

have been lost through perspiration.

Some even provide some carbohydrates, which can be a source of energy during exercise.

Another plus to sports drinks is that they usually have a mild and slightly sweet taste that can encourage you to drink more.

We all know we should drink water, but we don't always set ourselves up for success.

Here are some ideas to encourage daily hydration:

- > Start your day with a big glass of water before your coffee or tea – you'll create a good habit that can last a lifetime.
- > Review the situation at work.

If you tend to spend a lot of time at your desk, set a pitcher of water on your desk each morning.

It will serve as a reminder to drink more, and you'll be motivated to sip on it as the day goes by – and meet your goal of finishing it.

> If you're on your feet or in the field, make sure you have convenient access to water (or bring a water bottle with you).

> Set a timer or use an app for your smartphone or smartwatch that can help remind you to drink more water as you go about your day.

> Make it interesting: add in citrus, herbs, fruit, or a splash of juice to amp up the taste; go for a bubbly,

and other beverages.

The remaining 20-30% should come from watery foods such as fruits and vegetables.

Many people wonder if drinking caffeinated beverages such as coffee and tea counts toward hydration goals or against them.

The good news: moderate amounts of caffeine will not deplete the water in your body.

But do watch the calories in those fancy coffee drinks – large amounts of cream and sugar add-ins can rack up calories quickly.

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