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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WATER: IT DOES. MORE THAN QUENCH THIRST

Water plays a key role in keeping you warm and healthy all winter.

Thirst is a defense mechanism the body uses to let us know our fluid levels are imbalanced.

The body is made up of millions of tiny cells. Each cell requires a balanced amount of fluid both inside and outside the cell so each cell can properly function. If there is less fluid outside the cell than inside, fluid is drawn out of the cell to restore balance. A resulting lack of fluid diminishes the cell's ability to perform essential functions.

If cells don't function normally, overall body function begins to decline. To resolve this, drink fluids (preferably water) to replenish cells and restore normal function.

Regardless of ambient temperatures, our bodies need the same amount of fluid on a daily basis. Don't be fooled into thinking that lack of perspiration from warm, humid conditions lessens the need for drinking fluids. As temperatures drop in winter months, it may be more challenging to

drink the proper amount of water each day, but our bodies continually lose fluids through functions such as respiration and urination.

Thirst isn't the only indicator that we need to drink fluids. Additional indicators include dark-colored urine, dry or chapped skin or lips, constipation, feeling faint or tired, low blood pressure, and decreased appetite. Signs of dehydration may also include a sense of thirst, dry mouth, inability to focus, or lightheadedness.

Experiencing any of these symptoms could indicate a need to increase water consumption. If these symptoms are severe, it's necessary to consult a physician.

During winter months, our bodies require proper nutrition and hydration in order to generate enough heat to maintain a healthy body temperature. Water aids in the breakdown of fat for energy and assists in controlling our appetite.

It may not seem that a cold drink helps keep you warm. However, proper hydration is essential to the body's ability to prevent hypothermia, a medical emergency that occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can produce heat.

When hypothermia occurs, the heart, nervous system, and other organs cannot function normally. If hypothermia is not treated, it can lead to complete failure the heart and respiratory system and eventually leads to death.

Healthy sources of fluid include water, soups, and fruits and vegetables. Healthy choices of warm beverages include warm apple cider, milk, or a mug of unsweetened hot herbal tea. Generally, daily fluid needs are met through a combination of foods consumed and fluid intake.

Foods we eat supply approximately 20% of our daily fluid needs. The remaining 80% is met by drinking liquids. A general recommendation for women is 11 cups of fluid per day and 16 cups for men. During physical activity, increase fluids by 1 to 3 cups per hour, based on the level of physical intensity. Because the sense of thirst decreases as

we age, elderly persons should be especially careful to consume adequate fluid each day.

Daily fluid needs for children increase as they get older. Children 4-8 years old should consume at least 7 cups of fluid each day. Girls ages 9-13 years should consume 9 cups of fluid per day for and boys in that age group should consume 10 cups. Teenage girls should consumer at least 10 cups of water per day and teen boys should consume at least 14 cups.

If there is fluid loss due to sprots activities, fever, or some medical condition, fluid consumption should be increased accordingly.

As important as it is to drink fluids, it's equally important to select healthy fluid sources each day. Avoid drinks that contain high amounts of added sugars. Sports drinks are only recommended after significant fluid loss from fever or vigorous exercise of more than one hour. Juices should limited to no more than one cup per day.

Keeping children hydrated during winter months increases their ability to stay warm, making outdoor activities such as sledding, building snowmen, and waiting for the school bus more enjoyable. Adequate hydration also helps their skin and lips retain moisture and avoid chapping.

Healthy individuals who regularly consume caffeinated beverages like tea and coffee can drink up to three cups per day without significant side effects on hydration. Caffeine can have a diuretic effect on those who don't regularly consume it. However, it's not as significant as for those who regularly consume caffeine. Children and adolescents, pregnant women, and the elderly should limit caffeine due to its stimulant properties.

Alcohol is a fluid that may be detrimental to overall hydration and increase a person's likelihood of suffering from hypothermia. Alcohol acts as a vasodilator, which makes the skin feel warm, but drops the temperature of vital organs and can reduce a person's core body temperature.

Research has concluded that alcohol has been shown to interfere with a person's perception of cold and with the initiation of a shiver response. The shiver response is a defense mechanism of the body to generate heat and prevent hypothermia.

For these reasons, it's important to be mindful of the amount of alcohol one consumes, taking into account its potential effects on health during winter months. Alcohol should not be counted as part of a person's fluid intake.

Whether working outside, hunting, or enjoying other outdoor activities, it's important to our health to stay warm and hydrated in winter. When indoors, we may not notice the dry air created by heat increases our need for water to maintain sufficient moisture for internal body systems and our skin.

Whether we are indoors or outdoors during winter months, we must be aware of consuming adequate liquid to support normal bodily functions and help us stay warm.

Source: "Hydration in Cold Weather," PennState Extension

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