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K-State Nutrition PAGE – Practical Advice for Good Eating

Drink Fluids Often!

Do you take care to drink enough fluids every day? You need fluids for good health each day, but it's best not to wait until you're thirsty. People often become slightly dehydrated before they get thirsty. If you provide care to someone else, offer fluids often. Hold a glass of water or other nourishing liquid up to them when offering a drink. Drinking plenty of liquids can make a big difference in how you feel.

How much fluid is enough?

- Urine should appear pale yellow in color. If it is dark yellow or appears concentrated, you need more fluids.
- Healthy adults should drink 8 cups, or more, of liquids each day. Large adults need more fluid than smaller people do.

Enjoy more fluids if:

- you have a burn, a fever or diarrhea, or vomit or lose blood.
- the weather is very hot, very cold, or very dry, or your environmental air is heated or recirculated.
- you do a lot of physical activity and you lose sweat.

Enjoy nutritious fluids often

- plain cool water
- milk and milkshakes
- nutritional supplement drinks
- low sodium vegetable juices
- low sodium soup broth
- 100% fruit juices

Why is it important to get plenty of fluids?

- The body's vital organs are composed mostly of water.
- Your body needs fluids to carry oxygen, nutrients and medicines to cells; to cushion organs, tissue, bones and joints; and to remove wastes.
- Constipation is a problem for some. Drinking plenty of liquids helps make bowel movements soft, so they pass more easily.
- If you don't drink enough fluids, you will become dehydrated. Many are hospitalized because they become too dehydrated.
- Dehydration makes your kidneys work too hard, decreases the amount of saliva you make and reduces the tears moistening your eyes. It can make your skin feel flushed. You may get a headache, or feel tired or dizzy. Your pulse rate may increase. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke may result. Death can follow.

Can you "eat" your liquids?

Sure! Solid foods contribute fluids to your diet, especially:

- fruits, such as oranges, apples, grapes and watermelon
- juicy or leafy vegetables such as spinach, tomatoes and celery
- ice, ice cream, gelatins, yogurt, popsicles, and puddings
- soft, blenderized, and pureed foods
- Try to drink 8 cups of liquid in addition to the foods you eat. If you find that you are not that hungry for foods when you drink a beverage with your meal, try waiting about an hour after meals and then drink a glass or two of water, milk or juice. Drink in the morning, afternoon, and evenings!

Be cautious about drinking certain fluids

- Beverages with alcohol or with caffeine, such as coffee, tea, cocoa and some soft drinks, act as mild diuretics. (A diuretic speeds fluid loss by making you have to urinate more often.) Your body adjusts to this over time, so if you regularly drink these kinds of beverages, you may count them as helping you meet your fluid intake goal.
- Sweetened beverages add many "empty" calories to your diet.
- Sports drinks contain quite a bit of sugar, sodium and other minerals.

What can you do? Tips to increase your fluid intake

- Older people cannot rely on a sense of thirst to drink enough fluids, because the ability to sense thirst declines over the years. So drink plenty of beverages throughout the day even if you are not particularly thirsty.
 - Some people forget to drink plenty of liquids. If this describes you, try this: Measure eight cups of fluids, such as milk, juice and water, at the start of each day into separate beverage bottles. Store them in the refrigerator and drink all of the liquids from these beverage bottles throughout the day.
 - Sometimes, people restrict their fluid intake so that they don't have to go to the bathroom as often. If you have excessive thirst or very frequent urination, confide in your health care professional. You may have a condition that needs medical attention.
 - Keep lightweight water bottles close by your favorite chairs so that you can sip on them all day long. Fill them throughout the day.
 - Why not refresh with a cup of your favorite fluid right now?