

Introducing...Smart Juice

There is a nutritional drink, readily available, that can make you smarter, happier, and healthier. It supports proper immune function, helps you live longer, and is especially formulated for Santa Fe's high altitude lifestyle. For children, it provides better emotional health, more harmonious social behavior and improved performance in school. The quencher in question also increases urination, but that comes as no surprise because we are talking about nothing other than cool, clear water.

You probably know that your family should drink more water. But did you know that your ability to think clearly, focus and remember new information is frighteningly lower than it would be if you were properly hydrated?

Most Americans (most Earthlings for that matter) are in a state of low-level dehydration. For adults and children this can mean a myriad of mental, emotional and physical health problems. Among the noted effects of chronic low-level dehydration are anxiety, depression and impaired focus, in addition dehydration can cause memory, respiratory, circulatory and digestive problems. Current studies from health professionals and universities suggest that most school-aged children are "chronically partially dehydrated".

So how much water do we need each day?

Our bodies are 70% water. People who live at sea level need at least two liters (about a half a gallon) to replace fluid lost through breathing, sweating and urination. We lucky inhabitants of Santa Fe know how much faster water evaporates at 7000 feet. Here, a glass of water spilled on the floor is gone within an hour. Try that in the Mississippi Delta.

How do I know if I am dehydrated?

One simple rule is, if you are not peeing every 3 hours you are probably dehydrated. Another sign of dehydration is a dry and thirsty mouth. If you wait until your mouth feels thirsty to take a drink, then you have let your brain dry out enough to impair its functions.

What are the known effects of partial dehydration?

Dr. Paul Stillman of the Expert Group on Hydration says, "Symptoms can develop even in marginal dehydration, such as headaches, digestive problems, losses in concentration, cognitive impairment and lethargy."

According to a Tufts University study team, "Children are at greater risk for dehydration than adults due to their higher surface-to-mass ratio." Their research

on young adults showed that “dehydration corresponding to only 1% to 2% of body weight loss can lead to significant impairment in cognitive function [causing] increased tiredness ... reduced alertness ... and higher levels of perceived effort and concentration necessary for test accomplishment during dehydration.”

How much water do kids need to drink?

Some health professionals recommend that you drink your body weight in ounces. That is, if you weigh 100 pounds then you need to drink 100 ounces per day. While highly sugared or caffeinated drinks are better than no drinks at all, they contain short acting stimulants that many believe (this author/teacher being one) are not conducive to healthy mental function. The high levels of sugar and sodium in sports drinks are there for increased energy during strenuous physical athletics and are inappropriate for a seated school age child.

Carbonated water (called “seltzer” when I was a kid) is what I offer my students. Packets of Emergen-C which contain vitamins, minerals, and electrolytes (minerals that help the body absorb fluids) are how I get my daughter to slug down a big drink each morning.

Why don't kids drink enough water?

To begin with, few parents and teachers talk to their children about hydration. Fewer insist or require that their children stay hydrated. Some teachers are unaware of the importance of hydration and do not allow drinks in their classrooms. School administrations need to create a hydration policy that requires water breaks and access to good tasting good quality water. Another reason is that, for most kids, water is not a very exciting drink. Unlike more popular thirst quenchers, plain water doesn't taste like liquid candy or glow like automobile antifreeze.

What concerns you most about your child? Do they have trouble focusing on their teacher or on assignments? Are they spaced out? Tired? Confused? Irritable? Do they make careless mistakes in their school work? Do they struggle to remember spelling and math facts? Do they have trouble getting along with other students? Do they often complain of head or stomach aches that get better when they drink some water? What a shame to misdiagnose and sometimes medicate children for problems that are easy to remedy with a glass of water. Proper hydration is a real concern and it is one that is real easy to fix. The rest of life's challenges should be so simple to remedy.