



Eight a day?

Dr Paul Martiquet, Medical Health Officer

We all “know” that we are supposed to be drinking eight glasses of water every day, a total of 64 ounces of the fluid

of life. After all, water is essential for life. But is this true or is it just an old wives tale or urban legend?

Research and investigation has tended to discount the ‘requirement’ of the eight glasses. It turns out that there is scientific basis to the eight glasses advice. The latest recommendations say that we do not need to worry about drinking specific amounts of water. But staying hydrated has not gone out of style, just how you get there.

A study published by the American Journal of Physiology in 2002 questioned the eight glasses recommendation. It concluded that healthy adults living in a temperate climate and not engaged in rigorous physical activity do not need large amounts of water. When you need more because of physical activity, heat or humidity, drink more, and more frequently.

Every system in your body depends on water to work properly. For example, water helps to flush toxins out of vital organs; it carries nutrients to cells. Water also provides the moistness needed for ear, nose and throat tissue. Not getting enough water leads to dehydration. This is the condition when you do not have enough water in your body to carry out normal functions. Even in mild doses, dehydration can drain your energy and make you tired.

We lose water all the time, whether from perspiration, urine, breathing and bowel movements. Therefore, we need to replenish our water supply by consuming beverages and foods that contain water.

All fluids hydrate, as do many foods. Did you know that lettuce is 95 percent water? That’s even more than watermelon which comes in at 94%. Yoghurt consists of 85% water; even an apple is 84% water. All these hydrate yet do not get counted on the eight glasses scale. Coffee and alcohol may be two of the least likely to be considered good for hydration, but both will add fluids to your body—there are other effects, of course.

Although hydration is available from many sources, it pays to consider what else comes along for the ride. A frosty coffee drink or a bottle of fizzy and fruity

juice can both refresh and hydrate, but remember they are likely to be calorie-heavy, too. You will be refreshed, but may have

added 500 calories at the same time.

Water is essential to good health, yet needs vary by individual. No single formula is right for everyone. What’s right for you? The simple rule is to follow your thirst—you will never go wrong. After all, prehistoric man never ran around sipping on a water bottle—a dry mouth told him to run to the stream for a drink.

...prehistoric man never ran around sipping on a water bottle