

# Water Essential To Human Health

Many adults have had the virtues of drinking enough water extolled on them since childhood. Though recommendations as to how much water a person should drink each day have fluctuated over the years, it's still safe to say that drinking a significant amount of water every day is essential for your health.

Water keeps the body healthy in a number of ways. But the body loses water in a number of ways as well, each of which is part of normal human function. For instance, a body loses water when a person breathes, sweats, urinates or has a bowel movement. The body must replace this lost fluid in order to stay healthy and avoid dehydration.

In addition to fending off dehydration, water helps the body flush out wastes and maintain a healthy body temperature while reducing the risk of developing kidney stones or becoming constipated.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, water also helps lubricate and cushion joints and protects the spinal cord and other sensitive tissues.

The body needs water every day, but there are certain instances when the body will likely need more water than usual. If you spend ample time in especially hot climates, your body will need more water, just as it might during periods of physical activity. In addition, your body will need more water when suffering from certain ailments or conditions, including fever, diarrhea or vomiting.

Though many people feel drinking caffeinated beverages, including coffee and sodas, dehydrate the body, experts say moderate caffeine consumption won't dehydrate the body. A 2000 study published in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition found that healthy people who consume moderate amounts of caffeine don't lose more fluid than those people who abstain from caffeine.

Overconsumption of caffeinated beverages might prove problematic, but moderate consumption can provide the body with the fluids it needs without causing harm.

It's best to consult a physician if you suspect you aren't getting enough fluids, but there are also some indicators men and women can notice on their own. One such indicator is the color of your urine, which will be clear or pale yellow if your body is getting enough fluids. Urine that is dark yellow indicates the body needs more water. Constipation or hard bowel movements may also be the result of a body that isn't getting enough fluids.

While it's true there is such a thing as too much water, it is rare that a person drinks too much water. Endurance athletes are most susceptible if they only drink water during competitions. That's because consuming too much water will dilute the amount of sodium in the body, creating an imbalance that can cause confusion, seizures and possibly even coma. That's why many endurance athletes drink a sports drink that contains sodium, sugar and electrolytes during competitions. But even athletes who will be competing or exercising for more than an hour might want to choose a sports drink instead of just water to protect themselves and avoid an imbalance.

Many people find they don't drink enough water by accident. One way to combat that is to bring a bottle of water with you wherever you go. Another way is to drink water throughout the day at your office, which also gives you an opportunity to get up and stretch your legs over the course of the day. If you find water especially bland, add a slice of lemon or lime to give it more flavor.

Drinking a sufficient amount of water each day helps the body function properly and fight off a host of ailments.



Drinking enough water each day helps the body stay healthy and function properly.



Colorectal cancer is the second most common cancer in women. Certain screening methods are quite effective in reducing cancer rates.

## More Effective Cancer Screenings

A more comfortable and less invasive screening method for colorectal cancer is helping to reduce the rates of new cases and deaths as a result of the disease, according to the National Institutes of Health. Research sponsored by the National Cancer Institute revealed that colorectal cancer mortality (deaths) was reduced by 26 percent and incidence (new cases) was reduced by 21 percent as a result of screening with a sigmoidoscopy over a colonoscopy.

### WHAT IS A SIGMOIDOSCOPY?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a procedure used to see inside of the sigmoid colon (the last one-third of the colon) and rectum. This procedure is typically used to observe ulcers, inflamed tissues, abnormal growths and early signs of cancer. Sigmoidoscopy only enables doctors to see the lower part of the colon, which is generally why the procedure is less invasive than colonoscopy.

### PREPARING FOR THE TEST

Before getting a colonoscopy, an individual must refrain from eating solids for several hours to a day prior to testing and drink a specialized laxative that will clear the entire colon of waste. With a sigmoidoscopy, the patient uses an enema about 2 hours before the procedure to only remove solids from the sigmoid colon. The enema may take the form of flushing water, a mild soap solution or laxative. In some cases, a more thorough colon cleansing and a restricted diet may be necessary.

Because a sigmoidoscopy doesn't typically require an extensive amount of uncomfortable prep work, more people are inclined to undergo the procedure.

### HOW THE PROCEDURE WORKS

A doctor will place you lying down on your left side on the examination table. Then a long, flexible, thin, lighted tube called a sigmoidoscope is inserted in the anus and slowly guided through the rectum and sigmoid colon. The colon is inflated with air to give the doctor a better view, and images are sent to a computer screen.

Special instruments can be passed through the scope to take tissue samples or remove polyps. The entire examination takes about 20 minutes.

### ABOUT COLORECTAL CANCER

Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States, and it is the second most common cancer in women and the third most common in men across the globe. In the past fecal occult blood testing, or FOBT, was the primary tool for detection. However, now sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy are believed to be more sensitive tests for detecting potential cancer-causing polyps.

Among volunteers who underwent sigmoidoscopy procedures and follow-up over a course of 12 years, those who had the sigmoidoscopy screening had a 21 percent lower incidence of colorectal cancer overall and a 26 percent lower rate of colorectal cancer mortality than participants in the usual care group.

### WHO SHOULD GET SCREENED?

It is recommended that all individuals age 50 or older should opt for a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy to detect for abnormalities in the gastrointestinal tract. Individuals who are experiencing symptoms like changes in bowel movements, pain and bleeding, may want to discuss the option of having a sigmoidoscopy at an earlier age.

## Opting Out Of Vaccinations Potentially Dangerous

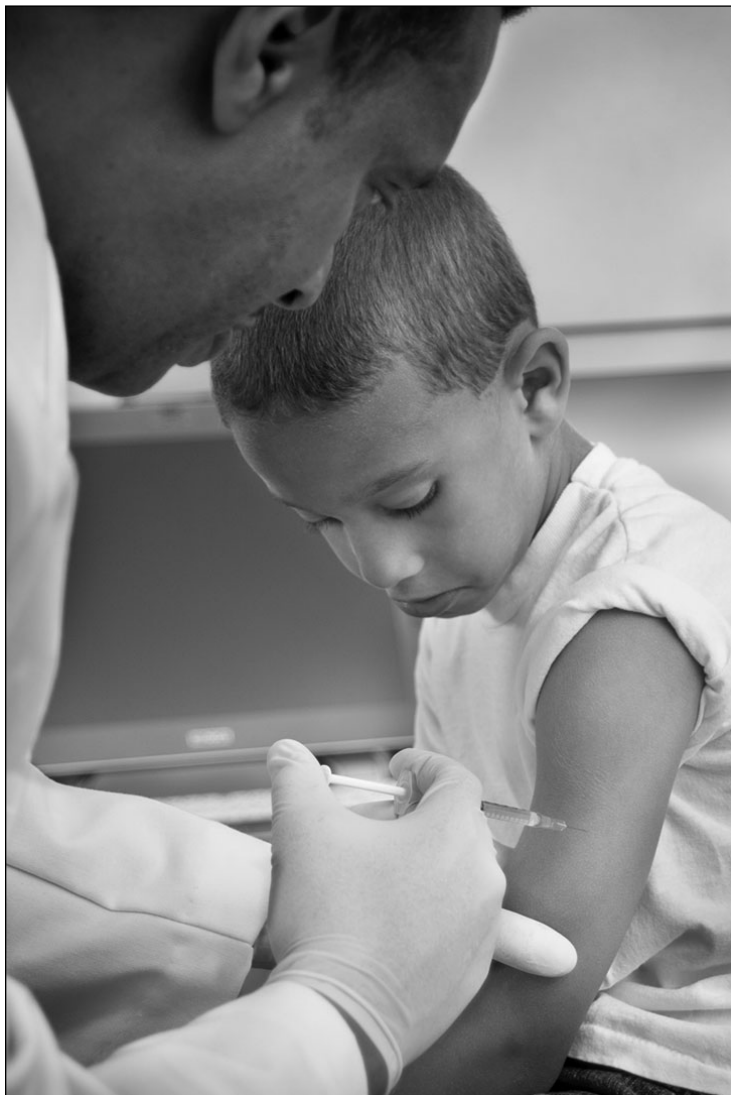
Childhood vaccinations are issued to help prevent children from getting sick by building their immunity to diseases that were once prolific. But in the wake of confusing information regarding the safety of vaccinations, particularly the concern that some may be linked to the onset of autism, more and more parents are opting out of having their children vaccinated -- sometimes with unfortunate consequences.

Many diseases that are effectively prevented by simple vaccines have cropped up once more. This can be attributed to children simply not getting fully vaccinated. Nearly 80 percent of parents are uncomfortable about having their children vaccinated, according to a survey analyzed by researchers at the CDC. Pain from the needle itself and uncertainty about the safety of vaccines is leading many parents to forego shots or delay certain vaccinations until their children are older. It is estimated that roughly 8 percent of American children are now not getting regular vaccinations or doing alternate schedules, and 2 percent are not getting shots at all.

Some parents would like to have their children vaccinated but have postponed routine visits due to unemployment and subsequent loss of health insurance. Some areas have even felt victim to budget cuts that have led to shortages of necessary vaccines.

In 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued an alert regarding Haemophilus influenza type b, commonly referred to as Hib. Five children in Minnesota contracted the disease, three of whom were not vaccinated.

The CDC also reported that there were 17 outbreaks and 222 cases of measles reported in 2011. A disease that was essentially wiped out in North America is now showing up again and the numbers are rising. Dr. Jason Bowling, an infectious disease specialist, said that in 2011 the United States had the highest number of measles cases of any country in the last 15 years. Although it is likely that most of the cases were contracted outside



of the country, kids who haven't been vaccinated are highly susceptible to measles onset as a result, potentially leading to a greater number of outbreaks in the United States and Canada.

Whooping cough, or pertussis, is a highly infectious respiratory disease that was once considered eradicated but has also made a resurgence. Various states across the country have reported many whooping cough outbreaks, to the point that it has been labeled an epidemic once more. Health officials in Washington state have said that the number of outbreaks from spring 2012 are the highest since the 1940s. While whooping cough is usually not fatal among older children and young adults, it can be very dangerous for infants.

Most health professionals

agree that vaccinations are important to the well-being of the child and the community, providing the safest way to prevent certain diseases or reduce their severity. There are several recommended vaccinations that children should receive:

- \* DtaP: Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis
- \* Hepatitis A
- \* Hepatitis B
- \* Hib
- \* Influenza
- \* MMR: Measles, mumps and rubella
- \* Pneumococcal
- \* Polio
- \* Varicella: Chickenpox
- \* Smallpox

Parents who have any concerns about vaccinations should speak to a physician to weigh the pros and cons of each vaccination.

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