

THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER IN HEALTH

We now know that the human body is at least 75% water and that it is important to pay enough attention to keep it well hydrated.

Dehydration can trigger many types of symptoms (headaches, tired eyes, cracked lips, dry mouth, impaired concentration, constipation...) even causing a relapse of certain illnesses. So, the modern trend of being aware of water and the need to drink more is based on good sense.

The environment is becoming increasingly polluted and toxins build up if we don't provide enough fluid to help wash them away. We live with the effect of how well we care for our body and drinking more water makes for a more comfortable time. Some health sources stipulate that most diseases are caused by a general lack of water in the body!

Good quality water sources include: filtered water, spring water, de-ionised water and freshly pressed fruit and vegetable juices (the water within plant cell walls is both fresh and organic). Some Ayurvedic practitioners advise that drinking 3 - 4 glasses of water first thing in the morning each day will improve your overall health.

How much water is it wise to drink a day? The National Institute of Health in the USA suggests 13 cups of water a day for men and 9 cups a day for women. This works out at approximately 1.5 - 2 litres of water per day. Of course allow for body size when considering how much to drink.

Beware: excessive water intake is harmful as it over-dilutes the natural balance in your cells.

Note: caffeine, stimulant beverages such as tea, coffee, colas and energy drinks increase dehydration by stimulating a diuretic response. This means they are not hydrating. De-caffeinated tea and coffee may still be diuretics for though caffeine has been removed, other diuretic chemicals may still be present in these drinks.

ABOUT VITAMIN A AND BETA-CAROTENE

Most vitamin A exists as beta-carotene or carotenoids which give fruits and vegetables their yellow and orange colours. Milk also contains vitamin A.

Vitamin A helps the eyes, preventing night blindness. It is essential for skin health and prevents skin disorders, e.g. acne, dryness... It also improves immunity where it protects against cancer, colds, flu and kidney, bladder, lung and mucous membrane infections. Vitamin A helps build strong bones and teeth, aids in fat storage and slows the aging process. Without A, the body cannot utilise protein.

Deficiency symptoms include: dry hair, dry skin, poor growth, dry eyes, abscesses in the ears, insomnia, fatigue, sinusitis, pneumonia, frequent colds and weight loss.

Effect of too much beta carotene causes yellow-orange skin but is not harmful. **Note:** people with hypothyroidism cannot convert beta carotene to vitamin A.

Sources: green and yellow fruits and vegetables in particular: apricots, asparagus, beet greens, broccoli, cantaloupe, carrots, collards, dandelion greens, dulse, some herbs, kale, mustard greens, papayas, peaches, pumpkin, red peppers, spirulina, spinach, sweet potatoes (please see over), Swiss chard, turnip greens, watercress, and yellow courgettes etc.

Daily Dosages: Vitamin A 10,000 IU. Antibiotics, laxatives and some cholesterol lowering drugs can interfere with vitamin A absorption.

THE AMAZING BENEFITS OF SWEET POTATOES

Not related to ordinary potatoes, they are sweeter and can be deep red, pink, orange to buff-white skins and beige to orange inside. When buying make sure they are firm with no soft patches. Will keep well for a week in a cool, dry place.

Used like ordinary potatoes with sweetness helping flavour. Baked, boiled, chipped, roasted, mashed. Can be pureed for soups and desserts.



Often flavoured with nutmeg, cinnamon, or candied with brown sugar and butter. Makes a great dessert with dried coconut, coconut milk, nutmeg and lime.



VERY rich in vitamin A, dietary fibre, cholesterol-free, are low fat and interestingly, they include omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.

Nutrients in 100g sweet potato (USDA National Nutrient database)

Item	Value
Energy	86 Kcal
Carbohydrates	20.12 g
Protein	1.6 g
Total Fat	0.05 g
Cholesterol	0 mg
Dietary Fibre	3 g
Vitamins	
Folic acids	11 µg
Niacin (B3)	0.557 mg
Pantothenic acid (B5)	0.80 mg
Pyridoxine (B6)	0.209 mg
Riboflavin (B2)	0.061 mg
Thiamin (B1)	0.078 mg
Vitamin A	14187 IU
Vitamin C	2.4 mg
Vitamin E	0.26 mg
Vitamin K	1.8 µg
Minerals	
Calcium	30 mg
Iron	0.61 mg
Magnesium	25 mg
Manganese	0.258 mg
Phosphorus	47 mg
Zinc	0.30 mg
Sodium	55 mg
Potassium	337 mg
Phyto-nutrients	
Carotene-a	7 µg
Carotene-β	8509 µg

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Although some diseases can remain “silent”, that is show no symptoms for a while, we can say that generally, a healthy body doesn't send any signals in the form of pain, tension, strange sensations (numbness, tingling), noise (joints, ears), unusual breathlessness, swelling, redness etc. It is just comfortable to live in.

We need to listen to our body and realise that these signals (symptoms) are the way our body speaks to us, tells us that something needs attending to or fixing. Do not wait until the symptoms get worse to seek advice or check with a health practitioner. Any ailment treated early has a much better chance of recovery.

There are many therapies available these days and sometimes, we need to be proactive and research other avenues if what we first try does not seem to work for us.

Of course we need to be soul conscious but we also need to take great care of our body: it is very precious.