

The Wealth of Water

by Elle Housman Positive Scribes

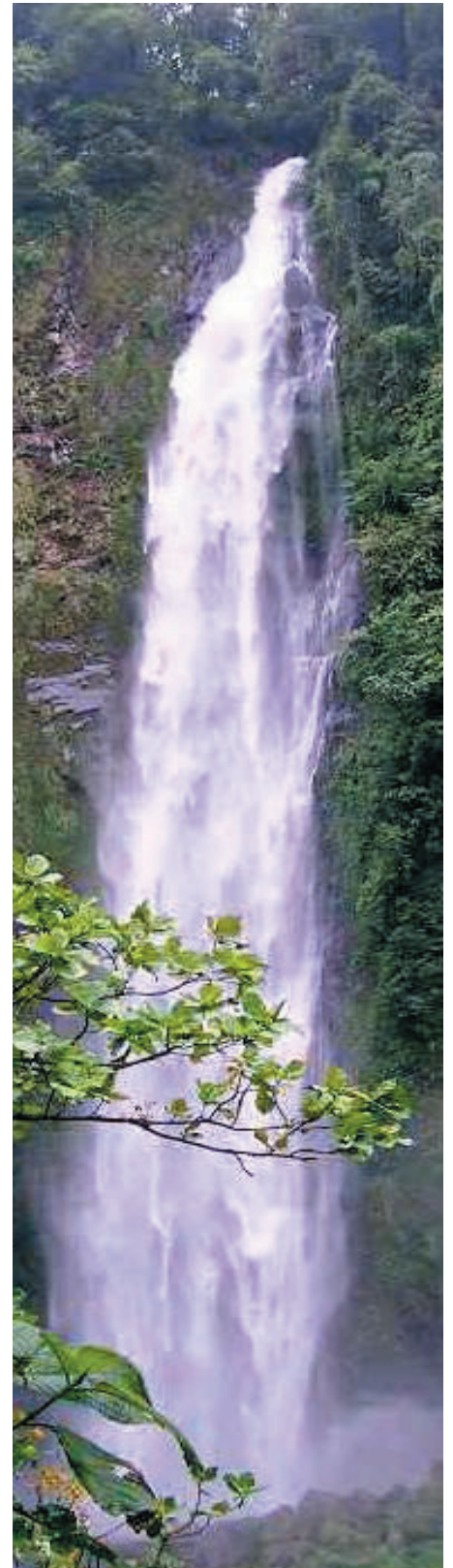
Everyone knows that severe dehydration leads to death within days; in fact, it's one of the leading causes of death worldwide. Most of us, however, aren't aware of the negative impact on both physical and mental health caused by being chronically mildly dehydrated, a condition currently afflicting a large and growing percentage of the US population. This subclinical type of dehydration is defined as a loss of one or two percent body weight due to fluid loss. Don't be fooled just because this type of dehydration doesn't require medical attention. This state of dehydration decreases both physical and mental performance by 20%!

Depending on age and leanness, the human body is 50-90% composed of water! Considering this ratio enables one to better understand the importance of this too easily ignored nutrient. Water is the body's life support. It assists in digesting, absorbing, dissolving and transporting essential and nonessential substances, removing waste products, regulating nerve impulses

and muscle contractions, and maintaining body temperature. It lubricates and helps structure your tissues and cells, is needed for chemical reactions, including energy production (metabolism), and to support the immune system.

Water is also necessary for proper sensory awareness and cognitive-perceptive functioning. You feel significantly more awake, alert, and able to concentrate when adequately hydrated. When you are dehydrated, your body seems to adapt to that state by having to put forth more physical and mental effort, resulting in headache, fatigue and decreased emotional stability, patience, and ability to concentrate. So before you reach for the aspirin, caffeine, or antidepressants, drink more water!

The physiological risks associated with dehydration are even more far-reaching, as research has revealed it to be a factor in childhood and adolescent obesity and the following diseases: urinary stone disease, urinary tract, bladder, colon, and breast cancers. Drink water as a powerful preventative action!





“Bring me water for the flowers in my mind”
 ~Eryka Badu

Now that you’re ready to increase your consumption of water, you will find the following information helpful. Adequate daily water intake requirements when sedentary (in liquid form; solid food form and water created by metabolic processes have already been accounted for): Men 7 cups, Women 4 cups. On top of that, keep in mind that you need to compensate for the following dehydrating factors by drinking even more water: if you are reaping the rewards of exercise (sweating) or of eating a high fiber diet, if you are ingesting diuretics such as caffeine and alcohol, if you are ill and are vomiting or having diarrhea, if you are in a dry climate, at a high altitude, or in extreme hot or cold temperatures. The following populations also need more water than average: Infants, children, pregnant or lactating women, and the elderly.

It’s a challenge to stay hydrated because our thirst sensor doesn’t alert us until our body is already in a state of mild dehydration.

We need to become more aware of this in order to consciously take action to stay hydrated. Other obstacles such as taste influence the amount of water that we consume. If your tap water tastes bad or your tap or bottled water tastes bland you can improve the taste by filtering it or adding a slice of cucumber, lemon or a crushed berry to it. You can also ingest more water by increasing your consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, as they have a naturally high water content.

Because public water is contaminated, it is treated with

chlorine, which, when ingested has been linked to increased chances of cancer development. Also, you may have heard of the terms “hard water” and “soft water”. Hard water has high concentrations of the minerals calcium and magnesium, while soft water has high levels of sodium. In areas where soft water is used, there appears to be increased levels of heart disease and hypertension. Soft water also more readily dissolves lead and cadmium from old pipes; and the latter is being questioned in the promotion of hypertension as well. You can flush out these harmful minerals by running the water for a minute before using it. As mentioned earlier, public water is chlorinated to rid it of contaminants, but well water is not and so it still contains contaminants. If this Catch-22 situation seems like a safety concern to you, a solution is to buy inexpensive bottled water from a pure source, such as a spring or a natural artesian well. A dollar worth of water will last several days.

Drink enough water so that your urine is pale yellow in color to clear. And unless you’ve just taken a vitamin B, your urine should not be dark yellow. This is a clear sign that you are dehydrated! On the other end of the spectrum, don’t overdo it with water consumption. Because our bodies cannot efficiently absorb more than a quart or two of water per hour; the excess is excreted through the urine, unused. In rare cases of over consumption of water, sometimes seen in marathon runners, a dangerous condition known as hyponatremia develops due to the over dilution of blood sodium. This condition, if not caught and treated soon enough can cause severe health risks.

