

**HOT WEATHER ADVICE .....That no-one can afford to ignore  
'Maintaining good fluid intake isn't just for summer'**

The hot spell is bringing with it the usual forecast of record-breaking temperatures and scenes of melting tarmac with people enjoying outdoor activities more typical of the Caribbean. However, though pleasant and often entertaining, such stories failed to convey a more serious and potentially devastating reality for many members of our community.



**How much to drink**

Many of us know that adults should drink 2 to 3 litres of water daily. But what about children? The recommended aged-banded intakes are as follows:

**Infants:**

For children under a year; babies who are breast or bottle fed with receive their entire daily fluid requirement from milk which is also their essential source of nutrients. This requirement may increase during hot spells of weather. For older infants from 6 months to 1 year the recommended daily intake is about 1 litre bearing in mind that around 20% of the fluid may be derived from weaning foods.

**Toddlers:**

For the toddler group of 1-4 years the recommended fluid intake is 800 to 1 litre. On a practical basis this might consist of 6 to 8 smaller drinks of 100-120 ml each day. The preferred fluid is water however it is okay for up to half of this amount to come from milk. It is wise to avoid fizzy or sweetened drinks which may reduce their appetite at mealtimes.

**Older Children:** (1 glass = approximately 200ml)

- 5 to 8 year olds - 5 glasses (1 litre)
- 9 to 12 year olds - 7 glasses (1.5 litres)
- 13 years + - 8 to 10 glasses (2 litres)

We should remember that there is also good fluid content in fruit which may contain up to 80% of water. About 20% of daily water intake typically comes from foods that have a lot of moisture/water content.

A very quick test in any of the level of hydration is to look at the colour of the urine. A persistently deep or dark yellow colour to the urine may mean that the kidneys are having to work harder to conserve water and that he/she needs to drink a bit more to meet the body's daily needs.

**Why does it matter? - The perfect storm**

You may ask, why it matters since apart from a little bit of thirst you feel no different whether or not you drink. This is the crux of the matter because it is what happens in between the hot spells that places particularly vulnerable members of our community such as the children and elderly at risk of dehydration during hot spell such as this. Children are dependent on their carers to ensure adequate fluid intake. Failure to maintain a good fluid intake during

milder spells leads to a learned behaviour of ignoring the drive to drink when thirsty. Also going for long periods without drinking reduces the body's response to dehydration.

A perfect storm of chronically poor fluid intake in the cooler spells may reduce sensitivity to thirst. The subsequent mild dehydration coupled with a short but intense hot spell of weather may result in potentially harmful dehydration.

Because of the small size young children and babies lose fluid and may dehydrate more quickly than adults. Parents and carers should watch for fewer wet nappies or the child becoming drowsy with sunken eyes; elderly people may present with increased confusion and falls.

Adults who take medication for high blood pressure are at risk of dizziness and falls if they do not maintain a good fluid intake. In short, because we are mostly composed of water none of us can afford to ignore the advice about maintaining a good fluid intake at all times, not just during the hot spells.

**Take home tips:**

- Ensure that you and your family maintain good fluid intake at all times
- Follow the same principle we have of checking in on the elderly and vulnerable friends/relatives during the winter. Make sure they are drinking well all the time, not just in hot spells
- If you develop any illness that causes diarrhoea, vomiting or sweating then your fluid needs will increase substantially
- If you have any on-going concerns regarding your health or that of vulnerable members please seek medical attention from your primary healthcare team

**Dr S M Lawrence – July 2019**