

Rethink Your Drink: Healthy Hydration

From fairs and festivals to ballgames and backyard barbecues, we love spending time in the summer sun. However, outdoor enthusiasts need to be aware that the typical Midwestern heat and humidity can create a challenge to staying hydrated.

Since water makes up about 60% of our total body weight, hydration is vital for good health and to minimize the risks of dehydration.

“It’s so important to make sure we’re replenishing that fluid that we’re losing from day to day,” urged Carly Zimmer, a registered dietitian at OSF HealthCare Saint James – John W. Albrecht Medical Center in Pontiac. She continued, “Water helps to help regulate our body temperature, helps to lubricate and cushion our joints, helps with digestion, absorption of nutrients, helps to relieve and prevent constipation.”

For years, it has been recommended that people try to drink 8 – 8 ounce glasses of water a day. According to Zimmer, while that is a good rule of thumb, fluid intake will vary from person to person based on age, weight, activity level and health conditions.

She also says water isn’t the only thing that adds to overall hydration.

“Really there is no set recommendation on the exact amount of water that we’re supposed to drink. More so it’s going to be on total water intake, so that’s including drinking water, water from food and also water from any other beverages,” explained Zimmer.

If the body becomes dehydrated, this can cause fatigue, muscle cramps, extreme thirst as well as loss of appetite, dry mouth, lightheadedness and headaches.

Zimmer says the elderly, pregnant women and children are even more susceptible to dehydration. She says parents and caretakers need to keep a close eye on kids playing outside and should make sure they are staying ahead of their thirst.

“Kids don’t always have that same regulation and maybe are a little bit more prone to kind of putting it off, and especially in warmer climates when it’s hot outside, our body doesn’t always keep up with that thirst regulation,” she said.

Staying ahead of your thirst can be a challenging concept for many. Zimmer recommends setting reminders on your phone to drink water, or setting short-term goals like drinking a set amount of water throughout the work day.

Water not your thing? Zimmer says you should add some flavor to help you hit water intake goals.

“The best thing we can do is to really focus on water,” said Zimmer. “Whether it be adding a little bit of fruit or crystal light or something like that to help get that water intake up, that would be helpful. But really focusing on water I think is the most important thing.”

OSF HealthCare Saint James – John W. Albrecht Medical Center in Pontiac will offer a free program about how much water is needed each day and share tips for staying hydrated. “Rethink Your Drink: Staying Hydrated” will meet Wednesday, July 31 at 3:30 PM at the Pontiac Recreation Center.

To learn more, [click here](#) or visit osfhealthcare.org/saint-james.