



Family & Consumer Sciences Oklahoma State Extension

Hydration is essential, especially during summer.

Everyone looks forward to summer vacation and spending more time outdoors. However, Oklahoma's extreme temperatures can easily put you at risk for dehydration. It is very easy to underestimate how much water you need to drink to stay properly hydrated, especially when you are on the on vacation, said Janice Hermann, Oklahoma State University nutrition specialist.

"When you're on vacation, it's easy to get caught up in sight seeing and other fun activities. For most people, thirst is typically the first indication of a need for water. Unfortunately, thirst lags behind the body's need for water," Hermann said. "It's important to drink more water than what you think you need to avoid becoming dehydrated." Obviously, one sign of dehydration is a dry mouth, but there are other symptoms too, and they need to be taken seriously. Other symptoms can include headache, flushed skin, weakness, dizziness, confusion, sluggishness, fainting, and muscle cramps.

Although your main goal while on vacation is to have fun, it is important to drink plenty of water. Hermann has a few tips that will help make it easier to stay hydrated while on vacation. "Carry a reusable water bottle that you can easily refill as you go about the day. If plain water is not your favorite, use unsweetened flavoring packets or natural flavorings, such as lemon or orange slices, to liven up the water," she said. "Bottled water can be expensive, so carrying a reusable water bottle can save you a few dollars that

can be spent on other fun things."

For those traveling by plane, pack an empty reusable water bottle in your carry on bag. Why take up space with an empty water bottle? Because airport regulations do not allow more than 3.4 ounces of liquid through security. Once you've cleared security, passengers can fill the water bottle before boarding the plane.

If you are traveling by car, pack a cooler with bottled water and some hydrating snacks such as cucumbers, celery, baby carrots, grapes, oranges or apples. For those of you with a vacation destination that will be hot, and you will be spending a lot of time outdoors, staying hydrated is important. Hermann said you will need to drink more fluids to replace those lost through perspiration. "The key is to consume fluids all throughout the day. Don't wait until the end of the day," she said. "Remember, thirst lags behind the body's need for hydration."

A hydration guide if you are going to participate in strenuous activity outdoors is 2 to 3 cups of fluid about two to three hours before the activity, plus an additional 1 cup of fluid about 10 to 20 minutes before the activity. Drinking small amounts of fluid, about one-half cup to a cup every 10 to 20 minutes during strenuous outdoor activity is also recommended. After strenuous outside activity, fluid should be consumed to replace weight lost. A rule of thumb is 2 to 3 cups of fluid to replace one pound lost through perspiration.

"For activities lasting less than one hour, plain cool water is best for

replacing body water because it can be easily absorbed," Hermann said. For outdoor activities lasting more than one hour where perspiration occurs, water by itself may not be enough. Sports beverages containing electrolytes and 6 to 8 percent carbohydrate can replace electrolytes lost through perspiration and are rapidly absorbed. Beverages containing more than 8 percent carbohydrate, such as juices and soda, can slow down fluid absorption."

Altitude can play a role in keeping yourself hydrated. For those planning a trip to the mountains, you will need to drink fluids more often. This is because humidity is lower at higher altitudes causing perspiration to evaporate quickly, so you may not realize how much water you are losing. In addition, oxygen levels are lower, which makes you breathe faster and deeper, so you lose more fluids through respiration at higher altitudes than you do at lower altitudes.

"Be sure to look at the Nutrition Facts label on the beverages you choose," she said. "The food label and ingredients list provide information about calories, carbohydrate, sodium and potassium to help you make better choices. Enjoy your vacation, but make sure staying hydrated is at the top of your 'must-do' list."



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