

Harmful Effects of Low Water Intake

Water deficiency in the body is called dehydration, which varies in severity:

- Mild dehydration—occurs when water intake does not match the average water loss of the body. There is a decrease in body weight by 5% or less.
- Moderate to severe dehydration—this occurs when there is active water loss from illness such as fever, vomiting, and diarrhea. It leads to a weight loss of body weight by 10% or higher and requires immediate medical attention.
- Persistent dehydration—some individuals consistently ignore their natural thirst or consume high amounts of salt, sugar, chemical preservatives in the food, caffeine, and alcoholic drinks. These individuals are in a state of persistent water deficiency or chronic dehydration.

Signs of Mild Dehydration. Even a mild degree of dehydration produces warning symptoms to alert the individual. The children get so busy playing that they ignore thirst or may replace water with sugary drinks, which do more harm than help. The warning symptoms of low water content in the body are:

1. Mood swings—irritability and lack of focus.
2. Headache—it is a very reliable sign of mild dehydration. If there is a headache after exercise or activity or outing in hot weather; it invariably is a warning sign that the body is low on water and one must drink water right away.
3. Lethargy, sleepiness, and dizziness—loss of vigor, vitality, and lethargy are rather late signs of dehydration and suggest that water deficiency must get addressed right away.
4. Hunger—a feeling of thirst, especially in children, is many times confused for hunger. If hunger feeling is untimely, manage it with water and not food or snack to stay slim and healthy. In other words, hand a glass of water to the child before offering the snack (same for adults).

Finally, if a young child is irritable, complains of headache, is low on energy and vitality or is untimely hungry, try a glass of plain water first. Same applies to an adult.

Signs of Persistent Dehydration. Individuals who habitually drink less water or consume salty foods, sugary commercial drinks, caffeine, and alcohol regularly in place of water have persistent mild dehydration. It presents with the following signs and symptoms:

1. Constipation—it is a common problem in inactive individuals and those who do not drink healthy amounts of water. Unfortunately, both of these habits go together.
2. Kidney stones—concentrated urine from reduced water intake is rich in calcium and oxalate crystals which form stones. To prevent concentrated urine, drink adequate amounts of plain drinking water to keep the urine flow light straw-colored, and the frequency of urination a minimum 4-5 times a day.
3. Poor skin health—the state of hydration and skin health are intimately connected. The secret of healthy shining skin is holistic plant food rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grain (not refined commercial grain flours), lentils, legumes, cold compressed seed oils, seeds, and nuts, plus plenty of plain clean drinking water.