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Think You're Drinking Enough Water?

If you're not, you could end up with excess body fat, poor muscle tone, digestive complications, and muscle soreness – even water retention problems.

Next to air, water is the element most necessary for survival. A normal adult is 60 – 70 percent water. We can go without food for almost two months but without water for only a few days. Yet, most people have no idea how much water they should drink. In fact, many live in a dehydrated state.

Without water, we'd be poisoned to death by our own waste products. When the kidneys remove uric acid and urea, these must be dissolved in water. If there isn't enough water, waste products are not removed as effectively and may buildup as kidney stones. Water also is vital for chemical reactions in digestion and metabolism. It carries nutrients and oxygen to the cells through the blood and helps to cool the body through perspiration. Water also lubricates our joints.

We even need water to breathe. Our lungs must be moist to take in oxygen and excrete carbon dioxide. It is possible to lose a pint of liquid each day just by exhaling.

So, if you don't drink sufficient water, you can impair every aspect of your physiology. Dr. Howard Flacks, CA, says: "By not drinking enough water, many people incur excess body fat, poor muscle tone and size, decreased digestive efficiency and organ function, increased toxicity in the body, joint and muscle soreness and water retention."

Water Retention? If you're not drinking enough, your body may retain water to compensate. Paradoxically, fluid retention can sometimes be eliminated by drinking more water, not less.

"Proper water intake is key to weight loss", says Dr. Donald Robertson, medical director of the Southwest Bariatric Nutrition Center in Scottsdale, AZ. "If people who are trying to lose weight don't drink enough water, the body can't metabolize the fat adequately. Retaining fluid also keeps weight up."

The minimum for a healthy person is eight to ten, eight-ounce glasses a day", says Dr. Flacks. "You need more if you exercise a lot or live in a hot climate. Overweight people should drink an extra glass for every 25 pounds they exceed their ideal weight. Consult your own physician for his recommendations."

Water Formula: At the International Sports Medicine Institute, they have a formula for daily water intake: ½ ounce per pound of body weight if you are not active (that's ten, eight-ounce glasses if you weigh 160 pounds); and 2/3 ounce per pound if your athletic (13 to 14 glasses a day at the same weight). Your water intake should be spread throughout the day and evening.

You may wonder: If I drink this much, won't I constantly be running to the bathroom? Yes, but after a few weeks, your bladder tends to adjust, and you urinate less often but in larger amounts.

Healthier You. By consuming those eight to ten glasses of water throughout the day, you could be on your way to a healthier, leaner body!