

Holism and Hydration: On the Importance of Drinking Your Water Every Day

By Sherry Dell, PhD, CN
Certified Nutritionist

Most people I see in my practice are dehydrated. Many drink no water at all. Most drink diuretics throughout the day (coffee, tea, sodas, alcohol), which actually cause the body to excrete more water. Some say they don't like the taste of water. But for the most part, people seem unaware of the power and importance of water.

I like to think of water in the body as a representation of the organizing principle of the universe; that is, flow or movement. All the physical and non-physical aspects of the universe are made of energy and energy is never static. Movement, or in other words, change, is the nature of all things—including our bodies. So as we begin to see that our bodies/our selves are not separate from the rest of the universe, it makes perfect sense that the body itself should work on a principle of flow and movement. Water flows. It provides movement very nicely. In our body it functions as a carrier, as a catalyst, and as a lubricant for movement, and much more. In this sense, dehydration is working against both our physical and universal natures.

On the physical level, water cures most of what ails us. I have seen hydration alleviate headaches, TMJ, nausea, constipation, arthritis, dry skin, dry eyes, dry hair, sinus problems, allergies, digestive problems of many kinds, insomnia, and much more. And I really do mean, ALLEVIATE, as in “make go away” or “cure.” It is truly amazing to see.

Most of my clients and I live at high elevation on a high plains desert and play at even higher elevations. Both of those circumstances demand even more aggressive water intake levels to achieve hydration. As do physical activities, outdoor activities, and stress in general. I always encourage clients to use this little formula for their baseline intake, but then to increase it as their lifestyle demands. *Divide your weight in half and drink that many ounces of purified water each day.*

Another wonderful physical attribute of water is its ability to function biochemically as an antioxidant. This means you can save at least some of the money you spend on antioxidants such as Vitamin E or C or zinc, etc. when you are practicing hydration on a daily basis.

Do remember that it takes time to become hydrated after years of dehydration. And there is something of an art form to achieving hydration. Simply gulping your 8 glasses of water each day, doesn't necessarily accomplish the goal (although, it's a heck of a lot better than not drinking any water). A glass or two of water first thing in the morning is a very good way to help the body finish up its nighttime housekeeping duties. But after that, I have found that it is most useful to sip water throughout the day rather than gulping glassfuls at a time. Also best to limit the quantity of water drunk with meals to about 4 oz, and to reduce intake several hours before bedtime. Water drunk

with meals tends to dilute digestive juices and impair digestive function and water drunk too near bedtime interrupts one's sleep.

From clinical observation, I have further come to believe that caffeine and/or alcohol in any amount makes hydration almost impossible. That one little cup of coffee or green tea in the morning may be enough to keep your body from holding on to the water that you drink the rest of the day.

Water is a fundamental piece of any internal cleansing or detoxification program. This makes perfect sense because when you think of cleaning you always reach for water as your cleaning agent. Water works in the body in a very similar way. As the elimination pathways (the skin, the lungs, the bowels, the kidneys, the lymphatic system) are opened with the flushing that is provided by water, the liver begins to cleanse itself as well. When the liver begins to function more optimally, many, many things can change in the body and of the body.

For example, on an emotional level, as the liver begins to function better, it is often the case that old emotional patterns can begin to shift. So in this, water has the power to begin to move emotions. In a very concrete way, it can literally provide the fluid for tears. And tears are a very powerful pathway for emotions. I've come to believe that some people have never cried simply because their body knows they can't spare the fluid. So as toxins begin to be flushed away on the physical level, emotions often begin to move out on the same elimination pathways. A common phone call that I get after a client begins a nutritional program is something like; "I'm calling to see if you would have any idea why I've been crying so much for the past 3 days."

On a spiritual level, water helps to clarify and again, to move. I lived through a flood last year. It rained and rained for days and weeks on end and then the water table near our home rose up and up until the bottom level of our home was under water. And it remained under water for 3 months. Our septic system was also under water so the house became uninhabitable. All the water in the world was surrounding us outside but we couldn't run any water in the pipes inside the house. We hired plumbers and engineers and people who use huge water vacuums and even an old fashioned dowsing rod. They all tried their best to re-route and to pump out and to generally dry up the water any way they could. But the water stayed put.

We bought a little travel trailer and parked it in our back yard and lived there; almost home but not exactly. So I had a lot of time to watch the water, to sit with it, and to finally just shut up and listen to it. This is what I learned. Water is enormously powerful. This isn't news because much of our electrical power in this country is generated by water. But think about it. Water goes where it wants to go. Period. We can try to resist it, re-route it, dam it, etc. But it takes us tremendous effort to resist that flow and eventually it all comes to naught. Water goes where it wants to go. On the other hand, if we flow with the water we are transported effortlessly to unknown wonders. You can make your own conclusions about the teachings made available to us from the water gods, but about the time it dawned on me that "resistance is futile," the water table began to go down. And within 3 days our home was dry again.

In closing, let me say that I truly believe that if you were going to adopt only one holistic health practice, let it be the hydration of your body. There is no risk, very little cost, and the potential healings are grand. Next time you lift a glass in celebration, let's hope it's filled with the crystal, clear, sweet nectar of the gods: water. Here's looking at you, kid.