

## BEAT THE HEAT ... STAY HYDRATED!

Our bodies are about two thirds water ... including 80% of blood, 73% of lean muscle (including brain tissue) and 22% of bones! Dehydration occurs when a person loses more fluids than he or she takes in, and the total amount of water in their body has dropped below the level needed for normal function. Common causes include gastrointestinal illness (vomiting and diarrhea), fever, excessive sweating (from exercise or the heat), and dieting by using laxatives or diuretics.

Small decreases don't cause problems, and in most cases, they go completely unnoticed. But losing larger amounts of water can sometimes make a person feel sick - check with your health care provider if you or your child feels dizzy or lightheaded, or seems confused, lethargic or exceptionally tired.

Dehydration can happen quickly, well before you feel thirsty. Drinking lots of fluids is usually a sufficient remedy:

- \$ Drink at least 8 glasses of water (or diluted juice, flavored seltzer, herb tea, lemonade, a sports drink like "Gatorade" or infant's "Pedialyte") each day. Make it a habit to keep an insulated travel mug or sports bottle with you throughout the day to sip a cool beverage.
- \$ Drink extra water before, during, and after exercise.
- \$ Include high water-content fruits and vegetables like watermelon, oranges or apples, peaches, tomatoes, cucumber or zucchini, and iceberg lettuce as a part of every meal.
- \$ If it's too hot to eat a meal, offer a liquid lunch like Ensure, Boost or Carnation Instant Breakfast.
- \$ Offer high water-content treats like ice pops or sorbet, jello, or custard as a snack.
- \$ Beverages that contain caffeine (coffee, tea, colas and alcohol) are actually a mild diuretic, and will increase fluid loss.
- \$ DO NOT take salt tablets without first checking with your doctor - the increased concentration of salt actually keeps fluids in the stomach longer, which leaves less fluid available for necessary sweat production.

**WARNING: *HEAT EXHAUSTION*** is a mild form of shock from excess exposure to heat. Dehydration is usually the cause: look for extreme thirst, pale, clammy skin with profuse sweating, headache, dizziness, fatigue and sometimes abdominal cramping or nausea. Although body temperature remains close to normal, move to a cool shady spot ... or get indoors to an air conditioned room, and offer lots of fluids.