

Dehydration's hidden symptoms

by Brian D. Foltz and Joe Ferrara, PhD

Chronic dehydration remains hidden as a cause of health problems because its symptoms are usually blamed on something else. For example, dehydration triggers the release of histamine. Histamine's function here is to regulate the thirst mechanism and conserve and ration available water in the body according to a priority of function. Elevated histamine can lead to allergies.

Allergies are a symptom of chronic dehydration. When you are dehydrated and histamine levels are elevated, your body releases a stress hormone called cortisol. This suppresses the production of white blood cells and you become more vulnerable to all kinds of allergens.

The dust, mold or pollen in the air made you sneeze, but it was chronic dehydration that raised your histamine levels and suppressed your immune system in the first place. Taking anti-histamines can help you feel better, but this only covers up the symptoms. Underneath, the problem of dehydration continues to take its toll.

The first signs of dehydration

Less energy is usually the first sign of dehydration because the cells of the body are the first to lose water. Water is a primary driving force of energy production inside the cells, so even the slightest water loss causes a big drop in energy. For every one percent drop of water inside your cells, energy production is cut by 10 percent.

Digestive problems are another early symptom. All the substances that break down food in the digestive tract are water-based. Acid reflux is thought to be caused by the production of too much stomach acid. However, too little stomach acid due to chronic dehydration is often the real cause. When the stomach doesn't have enough acid for digestion, food stays in your stomach too long and gets pushed back up, along with some acid.

As discussed in "Water: For Health For Healing For Life," a book by dehydration pioneer and researcher, Dr. F. Batmanghelidj, heartburn and indigestion after eating are dehydration symptoms that eventually lead to peptic ulcers. This pain is your body's way of telling you that it is extremely thirsty. Sometimes the pain is not severe, but simply felt as a discomfort in the upper abdomen. Sometimes the pain is intense and is around the appendix and might seem like appendicitis and other times it might be felt on the left side, over the large intestine.

Constipation is also a symptom of dehydration. The intestinal tract uses a lot of water to liquefy and break down your food so the nutritional elements can be extracted. The body reabsorbs much of that water, depending on its need. The more the body is dehydrated, the more it slows down the passage of waste through the lower intestine so it can extract more water. This causes constipation, which can become chronic and lead to hemorrhoids, diverticulitis, polyp formation and colon cancer.

As chronic dehydration persists and deepens, survival mode of the body are activated to manage and preserve water for the most vital functions. Batmanghelidj notes: "There are five distinct conditions that denote states of dehydration and operative rationing processes... Asthma, Allergies, Hypertension, Constipation and Type II diabetes." These conditions, each in their own way, help the body conserve water and/or protect vital areas of the body from the ravaging effects of dehydration.

Your body's many signals of thirst

Dry mouth is not the only sign of dehydration. It is not even a reliable thirst signal because your need for saliva to digest food will override the dry mouth thirst signal. As we become more dehydrated and grow older, the dry mouth signal is gradually blunted and can disappear entirely. You must learn to recognize the other indicators of thirst and dehydration.

The body has many ways to tell you that it is thirsty. Hunger feelings are often a thirst signal, since food is a natural source of water for the body and their control centers are next to each other in the brain. Your very first feeling of hunger should be satisfied with one or two glasses of water. You will notice an hour or two later your body's actual request for food energy will occur. Cravings for sugar and carbohydrates can also signal dehydration. The brain has a very high demand for water, which it only can get from blood flow. Carbohydrates raise blood sugar, which increases blood flow to the brain.

Dehydration is a frequent cause of mental difficulties, including depression. The brain is the top priority for water in the body and extremely sensitive to any water shortage. It is only two percent of the body's weight, yet requires 15 percent of the blood flow. However, it has no direct way to tell the body it needs water. So it will manifest feelings of anxiety, irritableness, anger, short attention span, impatience and even depression. If there are no plausible reasons for such feelings, it may be your brain trying to tell you it is thirsty.

Early pregnancy morning sickness is a signal of dehydration of the mother and fetus. It is caused by the water and the regulatory action of histamine explains Batmanghelidj. Pregnancy creates a very high demand for water. As the fetus grows into a full-term baby, over 1 trillion cell divisions take place. Each new cell must be filled with water. Pregnant women need to drink water and eliminate all sources of dehydration, especially the consumption of caffeine and alcohol.

What color is your urine?

Urine color accurately indicates short-term hydration levels. Dehydration causes your kidneys to recycle urine so it becomes more concentrated and darker in color. The darker your urine, the more dehydrated you are (not counting urine colored by certain vitamins, foods, medications, etc). Extreme dehydration is orange in color. The darker your urine, the more acid is in your body and the more damage is occurring at a cellular level. If you are well hydrated, your urine will be clear or a very pale yellow.

Dehydration creates an imbalance in your inner chemistry that sparks a cascade of negative effects, contributing to virtually any health problem or disease process. It translates directly into stress in your body through the increased production of histamine and the stress hormone cortisol. This increases blood acidity, which decreases oxygen uptake by the red blood cells and suppresses a myriad of enzymatic reactions vital to cellular function. More serious damage begins to occur when the proteins and enzymes of the body gradually become less efficient.

The primary cause of chronic dehydration has also remained hidden, until recently. The new science of energy medicine has shed light on the severe lack of vital energy in today's drinking water. This is why, despite drinking lots of water, many people still remain dehydrated. Fortunately, a new nature-based technology has been developed to restore this vital energy water needs to optimize cellular hydration.

Better hydration must become a top priority in patient care. By helping your patients understand and reverse chronic dehydration, they will enjoy better energy levels, enhanced results from chiropractic treatments and nutritional protocols, easier weight loss, reduced pain, better detoxification, increased longevity and an improved quality of life.

(Brian Foltz and Joe Ferrara, PhD, are the co-authors of the upcoming book, "The Secrets of Superior Hydration.")