

You Are What You Drink – Part 1

In this article we take a look at the impact of chronic dehydration on our body. Most of us already know we should drink plenty of water every day - many of us don't despite our best intentions! This article provides compelling facts about the role water plays inside the human body. In part 2 – we'll examine more about the warning signals your body emits and how to calculate how much water you need to drink!

Most of us know that the human body is composed of 25 percent solid matter and 75 percent water. Brain tissue is 85 percent water, but do we really understand the “so what” factor?

The impact of water reaches far beyond quenching our thirst. Did you know for instance that:-

- **The muscles that move our body are 75% water?**
- **The blood transporting nutrients around our body is 82% water?**
- **Our lungs providing our body with oxygen are 90% water?**
- **The brain that is the control centre of our body and is 76% water?**
- **Your bones are 25% water**

Facts like this help us to see why water is so important to our health. Our health is truly dependent on the quality and quantity of the water we drink.

I have been a bad back sufferer since the age of 14 and recently stumbled across the pioneering work carried out by Dr F Batmaghelidj into the effects of chronic dehydration on the body. His work concludes that chronic dehydration contributes to, and even produces, pain and many degenerative diseases that can be prevented and treated by increasing water intake on a regular basis.

If like me you are one of the 30,000,000 people who get back pain every year (many of us horse riders) you'd probably do anything and everything to get some relief from the pain. Incredible to think that increasing your water intake levels may be all you need to do!

The total weight of our body is carried on the L5 vertebrae and 75% of the weight is on the disc cord. The disc cord and spine are held by water! Just imagine what we are doing to ourselves (unwittingly) by not taking the time to swig some water throughout the day, or to stop during a riding lesson for a quick gulp or two! All joint activity comes from the gliding effect which needs water to be hydrated whether that is our vertebrae, our knees, elbows, hips, ankles – all the points so many of us suffer from aches and pains in, during or after riding our horses.

What else can chronic dehydration be a contributing factor towards, and cause in our bodies?

Take a look at the list below, you may be surprised!

- **Heartburn** – sign of water shortage in the upper part of the gastrointestinal tract
- **Arthritis** - signal of water shortage in that painful joint
- **Back pain** - water shortage in the spinal column and discs (the water cushions that support the weight of the body)
- **Angina** - sign of water shortage in the heart/lung axis.
- **Migraine** - sign of water needed by the brain and the eyes
- **Asthma** - free passage of air is obstructed so that water does not leave the body in the form of vapour
- **High blood pressure** - when there is not enough water to fill all the blood vessels that diffuse water into vital cells
- **Cholesterol in-balance** - cholesterol is poured in the gaps of some cell membranes to safeguard them against losing their vital water content

Your body as a tany system

When we starve our body cells of water, they start to complain - and set up many adverse reactions - such as the list above.

A "dry mouth" is not the only sign of dehydration and waiting to get thirsty is just plain daft! Pain in the body is a crisis call from our body for water! Our job is to pay attention to it quickly, recognising it as important and of course ultimately to prevent the need for it to yell in the first place!

When we are stressed or perceive a stressful situation the physiological translation of that stress is to ration the water reserves in the body. Our bodies, without our awareness, are constantly monitoring and managing our water levels.

Next time you are riding, or competing, and realise you have a dry mouth remember it is one of **the very last indicators** of dehydration of the body. By the time dry mouth becomes an indicator of water shortage; many delicate functions of the body have been shut down and prepared for a drought!

This is exactly how the aging process is established - through a loss of enzyme function. A dehydrated body loses sophistication and versatility.

As horse riders one of our biggest challenges is to remember to treat ourselves like athletes and athletes who are constantly in training. It would be a rare phenomenon to come across an athlete in any other discipline who does not treat hydration as a serious part of their every day performance and training. Why would we treat our bodies with any less respect and love?

If this article has raised your curiosity, then you will enjoy Part 2 which uncovers more about the warning signals your body emits to get your attention to drink water! We learn how to calculate how much water you need, and look at some handy tips and reminders for healthy drinking!

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Source: The Bodies Many Cries for Water by Dr. F. Batmaghelidj