



Accident Prevention

Winter . . . and Dehydration? YES!

by

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Dehydration is almost always a concern in summer, right? Well, yes, and NO!

Dehydration may be the single most important part of keeping healthy, especially as we age. Most people equate dehydration and sweating, and extreme exercise or work in hot environments. Most people think of it as part of the process of 'heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and the extremely dangerous heat stroke! They are partly right. The heat issues are related to your body not being able to keep cool, and thus build up too much heat. And sweating (loss of water, and therefore a potential for dehydration) is a key way we lose heat, when our body is overheated. That is only partly true. The way we lose most of our heat, and a lot of our moisture is through simple breathing – respiration. When that doesn't keep up, we will sweat, too. So, we always warn about keeping plenty of liquids on board when there is a chance we will need to sweat out some extra heat, in hot environments.

But, we need to be aware that dehydration is very common, and can be deadly, or unhealthy in the winter too! Dehydration is also the major cause and contributor to freezing and body temperature being too low in winter. And your blood clotting and ability to take out toxins and healthy kidneys and liver and other organs rely heavily on your body being well supplied with liquids! Your body's ability to process foods, make energy, and move heated blood around to keep your extremities (and your brain) warm enough is reliant on having enough liquid. During cold weather, and work outdoors, we may sweat more than we might in mild weather, especially with winter gear on. We just don't feel the sweat, as it dries and evaporates readily in dry winter air. We also respire a LOT of moisture from our bodies. You can even see it, in cold weather. And, we challenge our body's ability to keep warm by bringing in super cold air with each breath, which makes our bodies work harder to keep us warm. It's true, our bodies may be

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working harder in winter to keep us safe and healthy, then they work in summer to cool us. If you don't have enough liquid, every function of your body can be made to work harder and less effectively. Heart attacks, illnesses, fighting off germs and viruses, clotting problems, breathing problems, urinary tract problems, stomach and digestion problems and your ability to think clearly and work your muscles as hard as needed can ALL be compromised, and problems caused by too little fluids. As you lose fluids your ability to stay warm and your likelihood of becoming hypothermic, frost bitten, weakened or cramped up from low liquids increases. Clotting problems and internal damages can occur, and your body is not very healthy when its short on fluid! You'll feel colder and be susceptible if you do not have enough liquids.

So, even when you don't think you NEED fluids, and even when you are not 'thirsty' (or think you need to 'cool off') you should still have jugs of water on site, and probably should let the liquid be tepid (cool, not cold, using no ice – There is no need to cool your core, but there is a lot of need to get liquid in there!). Flavoring the water often makes intake easier and tastier – making workers drink more each time they get some. OSHA requires a water source on site for all workers at all times - not just in warm seasons. In a previous safety talk we told you about pee and seeing how it tells you about your hydration. Many workers will notice that they don't pee as often in the winter. That's a bad thing! That is dehydration! Its always a good thing to pee often, and to make sure your urine is pale yellow to clear/colorless. Anything darker is NOT GOOD for you or your many body systems. We lose moisture all day, every day, and even at night. It's just as important to keep hydrated in the winter as in the summer. Even when you don't think you 'need' it, you do! Top off your tank! Drink plenty of liquids during all work days, and at home as well. It's a good way to keep healthy and safe.

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