

## It's a Balancing Act

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People spend their entire lives balancing work, family, relatives, money, debt, travel, health and the list goes on. Balancing your health is similar to balancing your checkbook. We all want our checkbook balance to stay positive, always getting better and higher. So too with our health, always trying to maintain positive, better health habits. But when is our health really in balance?

### Keep your Body Make-Up in Balance

The human body is composed of bones, muscles, fat, various other tissues and water. You may be surprised to know that water is the most abundant component of all the aforementioned making up 50 – 70 percent of your total body weight. Water serves many functions in the body to keep it healthy and balanced. Yet, it is the nutrient in the human body that is most often “unbalanced”.

Water is easily gained and lost in the body making this a tough balancing act. In fact, on average we lose 10 cups (equivalent to 5 pounds of weight) of fluid from our bodies each day through sweat, excretion, and breathing. Hot, humid temperatures in the summer, increased physical activity, or moisture evaporating from heat used to warm your home during the winter months can increase the loss significantly requiring frequent replenishment to stay in balance.

However, adequate water intake alone does not guarantee a healthy balance. Sodium and potassium, two very important minerals in your diet, help regulate your body water. Monitoring the intake of these minerals along

**Do not be misled to believe you can pour on the salt. Many foods naturally contain sodium and must be included as part of your daily intake. Sodium Intake Adds up Quickly!**

- 1 cup of milk - 125 mg sodium
- 1 slice of bread - 135 mg sodium
- 500 ml or 2 cups of Red Bull energy drink - 200 mg sodium
- *Jack in the Box* Sausage Egg and Cheese Breakfast Bagel - 890 mg Sodium
- *McDonald's* Quarter Pounder with Cheese - 1150 mg sodium
- 1 ounce of dry roasted sun flower seeds - 200 mg sodium
- Orville Redenbacher Light Snack-Size microwave popcorn - 539 mg sodium

Keeping our body water in balance, keeps our health in balance, which might just make all those other balancing acts you're dealing with just a little bit easier!

with adequate water intake can keep your body and health in balance.

### So, where do these come from and how much is enough or too much?

Water comes from many sources other than a bottle or faucet.

About 80 percent of your daily water intake comes from drinking water and other beverages and the other 20 percent comes from water contained in foods. For example; a half cup of iceberg lettuce contains 95% water, a half cup of watermelon is 92%, milk is 89% and one medium apple is 84%. Flavored beverages contain sugars which increase calorie intake and caffeinated beverages enhance fluid loss. Plain water is best! New recommendations by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science suggest an intake of approximately 11 cups of total water per day for women and 16 cups for men.

Water is absorbed into the body by following other nutrients into and out of body cells. Sodium (from salt in our diet) is the major nutrient that water loves to follow throughout the body. However, the more sodium we eat, the more water we require and very often retain. Excess sodium intake can lead to edema (generally appears as swelling of hands and feet), high blood pressure, while increasing the demand on your kidneys to excrete the excesses. You should consume at least 500 milligrams (mg) (equal to 1 teaspoon of salt) but not more than 1,500 mg (3 teaspoons of salt) of sodium per a day.

Water follows potassium to a lesser degree, but just as important. Daily recommendations for potassium for both men and women are 4,700 mg per day. Typical daily intakes of adults fail to meet this recommendation, unless the diet consists of adequate consumption (4-5 cups per day) of a variety of fruits and vegetables. Time to hit the produce aisle!

Given the role sodium and potassium play in maintaining adequate water balance, appropriate intake for both nutrients is extremely important. For sodium, if you eat a lot of salted foods, processed foods and table salt, consider reducing your intake. When it comes to potassium, increasing your consumption of fruits and vegetables will help. ■

