

Raise a Glass--of Water or a Fruity Treat

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When the thermometer soars, nothing refreshes quite like a cold drink. Summer's heat and humidity can take a toll on our health if we do not stay properly hydrated. Over half of an adult's body weight is water; water is essential in converting food into energy, regulating body temperature, protecting and cushioning vital organs, and maintaining a healthy digestive tract. Low fluid intake or dehydration can lead to difficulty swallowing, dry mouth due to low saliva production, headaches, fatigue, loss of appetite, dry eyes, and muscle cramps. Most persons need to drink six to eight cups of fluid per day for proper hydration. This amount increases for persons eating high fiber foods or taking fiber supplements, taking several medications, especially diuretics for high blood pressure, or engaging in vigorous physical activity.

If your summer plans include outdoor activities, be sure to drink a glass of water before you go outside, even if you do not *feel* thirsty. Take periodic water breaks and make sure others with you, especially children, drink water, too. It is easy for children to become preoccupied with playing and other activities and not drink enough water. Complaints of headaches, fatigue, and not feeling hungry could indicate that they are dehydrated.

In addition to water, 100 percent fruit juices also contribute to daily fluid intake. Fruits and vegetables naturally are high in water so a fruit cup, watermelon, or grapes can help quench thirst while providing important antioxidants, fiber, and other vitamins and minerals.

Hosting a gathering around the grill? Dr. Linda Bobroff, RD, University of Florida/IFAS Extension Nutrition Specialist, offers these ideas for refreshing summer beverages:

Lime Spritzer

Add a squeeze of fresh lime juice (to taste) to a glass of seltzer or club soda with crushed ice for a refreshing and no-calorie thirst quencher.

Strawberry Milkshake

Mix in a blender on high: one cup fat free milk, 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract, one tablespoon sugar OR two packets sugar substitute (or sweeten to taste), and 1/2 cup quartered frozen strawberries. [Wash, quarter, and freeze strawberries at the height of their season; they will keep for about six months.]

Banana Milkshake

Mix in a blender on high: one cup fat free milk, 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract, one tablespoon sugar OR two packets sugar substitute (or sweeten to taste), and one small sliced frozen banana. [Frozen sliced bananas will keep about two weeks.]

Orange Smoothie

Mix in a blender on high: one cup fat free milk, one small can frozen orange juice concentrate, 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract, 1/4 cup sugar or equivalent sugar substitute (or sweeten to taste). Add ice cubes one at a time until desired consistency (about 12).

For a new take on a summer staple, mix up a batch of this cool treat:

Watermelon Lemonade

6 cups watermelon cubes (seeds removed)

1/4 cup raspberries

1 cup water

1/3 cup sugar

1/2 cup lemon juice

Place watermelon, raspberries, and water in container of electric blender, cover, and blend until smooth. Strain through fine mesh strainer into pitcher. Stir in sugar and lemon juice until sugar dissolves. Refrigerate until chilled, about one hour. Makes 4 servings.

For more ideas for cool summer treats, visit the Solutions for your Life website,
<http://fycs.ifas.ufl.edu/news/2007/05/summertreats.html>.

Sources: *Healthy Eating: Fluids*, Linda B. Bobroff and Luisa Oliver-Cordero, University of Florida/IFAS Extension
Ten Tips for Cool Summer Treats, Linda B. Bobroff, University of Florida/IFAS Extension,
<http://fycs.ifas.ufl.edu/news/2007/05/summertreats.html>.
Watermelon Celebration Chef's Best, The National Watermelon Promotion Board.