

Toolbox Talk

Importance of Hydration

Hard at work or at play, keeping your body hydrated is very important. As your heart rate, body temp, and breathing start to increase, the body is using the water it stored to keep you cool. Working in warmer climates is especially important to know the signs of dehydration and how to keep it from happening to you.

Early Signs of Dehydration

- Feeling fatigued, especially sooner than you normally would
- Excessive sweating
- Dry mouth
- Headache
- Legs feel heavy, or start to feel twitching in your calf muscles

Sweating is the largest contributor to water loss. As you continue to sweat, the fluid is lost and needs to be replaced through drinking water, sorry but swimming or dumping water on your head just won't cut it. Losing just 2% of bodily fluid causes fatigue and impairs cognitive skills, which can lead to other accidents.

What Not to Drink: Drinks with high sugar content like soda and juice are hard for the body to absorb. Your body will also be wasting energy trying to break down sugars and extra ingredients, making for a slower recovery. Caffeine and alcohol are very hard on the body and terrible for staying hydrated.

What to Drink: Room temperature water is the best, easily absorbed by the body and gets straight to work. Cold water might feel enjoyable but it does take extra energy for the body to warm and distribute. Studies have shown sports drinks like Gatorade (with a little flavor and sodium) encourage people to keep drinking, giving a fun alternative to warm water.

When to Drink: Take in some water before you start work. Trying to play catch-up with lost fluid is difficult, imagine trying to drive to the gas station after the tank is empty. Once you feel thirsty, you are close to being dehydrated (if not already). Treat your workday like a sports game, take regular and scheduled breaks to rest and hydrate.

It is impossible to measure how much water you are losing to know how much you need to drink. If you are really moving and sweating, you should stop every half hour to take some fluids.

Questions for you:

1. What will the temperature be tomorrow, and what are you working on?
2. Do you think you should pack some extra water?
3. At what temperature do you start taking extra water breaks?

