

# STAFF RESOURCES

## Keeping Your Students Hydrated in the Classroom

Most people are aware that a lack of fluids leads to dehydration, but not everyone knows that the risk of dehydration is greater for children than for adolescents and adults. This is because a child's body produces more heat while at the same time perspiring less, causing it to take longer to cool down.

The human body is made up of 55-75 percent water. The body can last for weeks without food but only days without water. Water forms the basis of blood, digestive juices, urine and perspiration; it is contained in lean muscle, fat and bones. Since the body cannot store water, we need a fresh supply every day due to what we lose from our lungs, skin, urine and feces.

Light color and an increased quantity of urine are better indicators of adequate hydration than thirst. Children with hard stools also benefit from more fluids as well as dietary fiber. Symptoms of dehydration include headaches, lethargy, mood changes, slow responses, dry nasal passages, dry or cracked lips, dark-colored urine, weakness, and confusion.

### Essential Functions of Water

We need water to:

- maintain the health and integrity of every cell in the body.
- keep the blood stream liquid enough to flow through blood vessels.
- help eliminate toxins (such as those found in tea, coffee, alcohol, refined foods and soft drinks) through urine and feces.
- regulate body temperature through sweating.
- keep mucous membranes moist (such as those of the lungs and mouth).
- lubricate and cushion joints.
- reduce the risk of bladder infection by keeping the bladder clear of bacteria.
- aid digestion and prevent constipation.
- work as a moisturizer to improve the skin's texture and appearance.
- carry nutrients and oxygen to cells.
- serve as a shock absorber inside the eyes and spinal cord.

Most school-age children require six or seven eight-ounce cups of fluids a day. Water is a vital nutrient that is often overlooked; keeping your students properly hydrated is one of the easiest ways to help them be healthier. Don't forget the essential role of water in your students' lives, as well as in your own.



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