



TOOLBOX TALK:

Dehydration & Mental Health



DEHYDRATION & MENTAL HEALTH

STANDUP

We hear about how important hydration is for our physical health, but did you know that **hydration and mental health are more tightly connected than most people realize?**

Researchers found that men and women who drank the least amount of water (less than two glasses per day) were at significantly higher risk for depression than those who drank five glasses or more per day.

Losing just 1-2% of your body weight in fluids from sweat or dehydration is not even enough to trigger feeling thirsty, BUT it can impair memory, concentration, and mood.

When your body becomes dehydrated, the brain's ability to regulate and stabilize is impaired. This affects mood. The result can feel very much like generalized anxiety: restlessness, a sense that something is wrong without knowing what, and a reduced capacity to tolerate normal frustrations.

Additionally, brain cells communicate using electrical signals. Water maintains the electrolyte balance needed for these signals. Dehydration can disrupt this, leading to poor communication and slower thinking, making dehydration a true safety concern.

To avoid the mental and physical impacts of dehydration, **STAND Up for Hydration!** The acronym STAND reminds us of ways to remain hydrated throughout the day:

- **Start** drinking early - before you get thirsty, before you start working hard, and before it gets hot!
- **Take** a water bottle with you. This will help make sure you keep the hydration up.
- **Automate** it. Use alarms to remind you to drink throughout the day.
- **Non-caffeinated and non-alcoholic beverages.** Caffeine and alcohol are both diuretics: this means they will make you get rid of water at a faster rate than normal, which is the opposite of what you want. Stick with non-caffeinated and non-alcoholic beverages such as water, sports drinks and believe it or not milk!
- **Do add electrolytes.** Water isn't the only name in the hydration game. Electrolytes matter for everyone. Electrolytes can be purchased in powders, pills, or even made at home. Just don't overdo it! You can have too many electrolytes so it's important to mix it up throughout the day.

Discussion Questions:

1. How much fluid do you need to lose before it affects your brain?
[Answer: 1-2% of your body weight]
2. What are some challenges when it comes to getting enough water and other fluids? How might we address those?

Sources:

- [Dehydration and Mental Health: The Hidden Link Between Water Intake and Cognitive Well-being](#)
- [Hydration and Mental Health: How Water Intake Affects Focus](#)
- [Hydration and Mental Health: How Are They Related?](#)