

BY TERRI D'ARRIGO

[a trimmer you]

# DRINK UP!

## *The Wonder Of Water*

*A Trimmer You is a new monthly column devoted to exploring the science, challenges, and triumphs of weight loss.*

**W**hen it comes to weight loss, the smallest lifestyle changes can provide the biggest boosts. One of the easiest changes you can make is to drink more water.

Adequate hydration helps ward off the physical and mental fatigue that can leave you vulnerable to unnecessary snacking. It also aids your digestion and contributes to a feeling of fullness when you eat. Although most beverages can provide these benefits, water is the ideal weight loss drink because it does all of this without calories.

In fact, swapping just one can of juice or regular soda per day for water results in a daily deficit of roughly 200 calories. That adds up: In a recent study of 240 overweight women who were trying to lose weight, researchers found that women who replaced sweetened drinks with water lost an average of 5 more pounds per year than

those who didn't, and the researchers attribute this in part to calorie replacement.

Drinking water can also help you avoid water retention and the discouraging extra few pounds that go with it, says Kathleen Stanley, CDE, CN, RD, LD, MSED, BC-ADM, diabetes education program coordinator and instructor at Central Baptist Hospital in Lexington, Ky. "The body is good at regulating itself," Stanley says. "When you're well-hydrated, extra fluid is drawn out of your body tissues. But if you deprive your body of water, it tries to conserve what it has."

So how much water do you need? That depends on a number of factors, says Stanley. "There's no government Recommended Daily Allowance, but generally you should take in about 1 milliliter of fluid per calorie."

For example, if your eating plan allows 2,000 calories a day, that comes to 2 liters of water a day. She adds that you'll need more if you break a sweat at work or play or if you're pregnant or nursing, so talk to your doctor or nutritionist about finding the right balance of fluids for your particular needs.

That said, if you have a well-balanced diet, you can get about

20 percent of your fluids from the foods you eat. The rest you'll have to drink. If the tap water in your area tastes good, it's fine to make that your main beverage, but if you prefer bottled water, Stanley advises you to read the label. "Many gourmet waters and flavored waters contain hidden carbohydrates, and that can affect your blood glucose," she says.

Finally, listen to your thirst. Unless you're a long-distance runner or cyclist and you're not taking in enough electrolytes and salt during an event, or you have a rare hormonal deficiency, it's difficult to drink too much water. If you're thirsty, first check your blood glucose to make sure it's not too high, especially if you've been urinating a lot. If it's high, treat it, and—you guessed it—drink water. Dehydration combined with high blood glucose can lead to a dangerous condition called diabetic ketoacidosis that can send you to the hospital.

But even if your blood glucose is fine, have that crystal clear glass of water. It's not only good for you, it can help you in your weight loss journey.

*Terri D'Arrigo is an associate editor of Diabetes Forecast.*