

Water and joint pain

Description

Gentle Reader,

Does Drinking More Water Help With Joint Pain?



Senior man drinking a glass of water

Photo Credit Digital Vision/Digital Vision/Getty Images

Gentle Reader,

I was a guest at a Merrill Gardens in West Seattle, giving a talk about graceful aging. I asked the staff, “What is your most frequent reason for calling 911?” I assumed it was because a resident fell and the staff needed help getting the person up from the floor. No. The most frequent call was in conjunction with a fainting, sinking to ground of an elderly resident. The first thing the paramedics asked, “When was the last time you had a drink of water?”

Dehydration is common in older adults. Probably because drinking a lot sends you to the bathroom. If you hurt from arthritis, you don’t want to move. So you don’t drink water. The resistance to drinking water is a spiral downward toward poorer and poorer health.

To quote Valerie: *The amount of water you drink in a day can affect your joint health. There are many reasons why your joints might hurt. You could have arthritis, chronic dehydration, gout or the flu. Increasing your water intake may not cure your joint pain completely, but it can help your body handle the underlying issues that are causing you pain.*

Function

Your joints are like hinges where two bones come together. Ligaments connect bones to each other and a coating of cartilage covers the bone surface to keep the two bones from rubbing directly against each other. A special liquid called synovial fluid fills the space between bones and provides food to the joint and cartilage. A healthy, well-nourished joint is able to move without pain, but sometimes chronic stress, an injury or a buildup of acidic crystals in the joints can cause pain.

Hydration

Staying properly hydrated throughout the day gives your body several advantages. Water helps you maintain an adequate blood volume so that nutrients can move through your blood and into your joints. If you think of your joints like a sponge, imagine how much more easily two wet sponges can move against one another than two dry, hard sponges. Water also allows waste products to move out of the joints. In addition to taking doctor-prescribed medication, people who suffer from gout pain should drink at least six to eight glasses of water every day.

Dehydration

The Missouri Department of Health and Human Services explains that chronic dehydration can lead to thirst, constipation, frequent joint pain, stomach pain, low energy and confusion. Unfortunately, your body's ability to sense thirst might lag behind its need for water. The best way to prevent dehydration is to make a conscious effort to stay hydrated throughout the day. Drink plenty of water before any exercise, so that your body has some reserve fluid it can use for cooling.

Quoted from Jennifer Davis, in <http://www.arthritistoday.org/news/drink-water-gout-attack008.php> The more you drink, the less you hurt.

It has been thought that dehydration is a possible trigger for gout attacks, so researchers

at the Boston University School of Medicine wanted to determine if drinking water could reduce their likelihood.

“Dehydration can increase the concentration of serum uric acid in the blood. It can also affect the kidney’s ability to clear uric acid and can make uric acid more likely to form crystals. In combination, these factors can lead to an increased risk for a gout attack. Water can reverse the effects of dehydration,” says lead author Tuhina Neogi, MD, PhD.

For this Internet-based study, researchers recruited 535 people with gout who had experienced a gout attack within one year of the study. Seventy-eight percent were men, their average age was 53 and their gout diagnosis was confirmed through medical records. Participants were asked to provide information about how much water they consumed in the 24 hours before each gout attack and during times when they did not have a gout attack. Participants could respond with zero to one glasses per 24-hour period, two to four, five to eight or more than eight.

The results showed that with each glass of water consumed in the 24 hours before an attack, the risk for recurrent gout attacks decreased, even when accounting for other fluid intake.

“For example, those drinking five to eight glasses of water had a 40 percent reduced risk of gout attack compared with those who drank only one glass of water or less in the prior 24 hours,” Dr. Neogi explains.

Dr. Neogi says he can’t make specific recommendations about the amount of water people should drink because it depends on their underlying medical conditions and physical activity levels. He says patients should talk to their doctor if they have any questions on that front.

The study was presented at the 2009 annual meeting of the American College of Rheumatology in Philadelphia.

John Sundy, MD, PhD, a rheumatologist and associate professor of medicine at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C., questions the reliability of the information in this study because it is based solely on patient’s recall. “If you are asking people to recall dietary intake any more than 12 hours after the fact, it is notoriously inaccurate,” he explains.

But he says the results are still intriguing because they provide scientific proof to existing

anecdotal evidence. “I think it’s probably one of the first efforts to try to actually gather data to test this hypothesis or this notion that dehydration is important. The dehydration issue had been driven a lot by doctor-patient experience but there are limited examples,” Dr. Sundry says. “I think what it is, is an effort to provide new confirmation to an old idea.”

Dr. Sundry says there are plenty of other benefits to staying hydrated, so he doesn’t think it would hurt most patients to drink water regularly. “It’s one more tool in the tool chest that might be helpful,” he says. “This might be a reasonable thing to try.”

But he cautions there are some people who have to be careful with their fluid intake. That includes people with poor heart function or poor fluid handling by kidneys not able to eliminate a water burden.

Dr. Neogi says he and his research team are continuing to study potential triggers for gout attacks, including other liquids. They don’t think all liquids will have a beneficial effect on reducing the risk for recurrent gout attacks because some, including caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, may have potentially detrimental effects on serum uric acid and volume status.

Anyone who is active, i.e. walking vigorously, hiking, playing tennis or other sports and experiences arthritis pain in their joints may want to consider more than just water for hydration. Water alone may not give you the support you need if you are sweating during your exercise. Hydrating with electrolytes can increase the benefit of water, but only if the sugar/mineral balance is effortless to absorb, requiring no rebalancing in the body. Most of the electrolyte drinks on the market do not have optimal absorption rates.

Most sports drinks on the market are what sports scientists call isotonic, which means they contain a carbohydrate solution that is at 6-8% concentration. These drinks are in the middle of the spectrum in terms of absorption rate, with water being the most readily absorbed (hypotonic) and something like fruit juice, being greater than 8% sugar concentration (hypertonic) being the least absorbable. Because the sugar concentration of most sports drinks is higher than that of most body fluid they are not readily absorbed into the blood stream and are thus not optimal for hydration. Thanks to [Runner’s Connect](#) for this.

The Shaklee company made the most bio-available hydrating drink ever (big sweeping statement, I know) in [Performance](#). A team of engineers at MIT built a human powered flying machine from Leonardo da Vinci’s model to reenact the Greek Daedalus myth.

The MIT Aeronautics and Astronautics Department's **Daedalus** was a human-powered aircraft that, on 23 April 1988, flew a distance of 71.5 mi (115.11 km) in 3 hours, 54 minutes, from Iraklion on the island of Crete to the island of Santorini. The flight holds official [FAI](#) world records for total distance, straight-line distance, and duration for human-powered aircraft.



testing the Daedalus before
the flight

This light plane was powered by a bicycle-riding person able to keep peddling for the equivalent of three marathons, without stopping. The team sampled all the available supplemental drinks to find one that would do the job. In the end, they came to Shaklee's science team and asked them to develop a drink that would keep the cyclist in the air while peddling across the Aegean Sea. The article published in the American Scientist, July-August 1988 can be read [here](#).

Personally, I drink Performance every time I go hiking, mixing some powder in my water. It gives me that added stamina toward the end of the trail. No bonking, please. Use Shaklee [Performance](#). It is helpful during any exercise, including a vigorous day of gardening. Try it.

Be well, Do well and Keep Moving.

Betsy

I welcome your comments.

www.HiHohealth.com for shopping



Category

1. Be Well health tips

Tags

1. Daedalus project
2. dehydration
3. gout
4. hydrating drink
5. joint pain
6. water for pain

Date Created

March 20, 2015

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