

[IMAGE]

## Hydration & Healthy Aging

By Editorial Staff

Adequate hydration is essential to life. You can technically live without food for several months, but without water, you'll die in about a week (and start declining well before then). Even if you're hydrated, if you're not consistently getting enough of the right liquids (namely water) in your system, your health will suffer. In fact, research suggests that for older adults, healthy aging is next to impossible without proper hydration.

The problem in today's society is that hydration, which used to be accomplished almost exclusively with H<sub>2</sub>O, has been replaced with a variety of other liquids that don't deliver what the human body needs. You might drink plenty of liquids throughout the day, but if it's primarily in the form of soda, energy drinks and added-sugar fruit juices, your hydration needs aren't being met.

Research findings published in *eBiomedicine* suggest fluid intake – as indicated by serum sodium levels, which increase as fluid intake declines, and vice versa – is a strong predictor of healthy aging. Researchers analyzed health data from 11,000 middle-aged adults, collected over a 30-year period as part of the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) Study. Adults with high serum sodium levels (high end of normal range) were more likely to develop chronic diseases, including heart failure, stroke, chronic lung disease, diabetes and dementia); age biologically compared to their chronological age; and die prematurely compared to adequately hydrated adults.

What's adequate hydration? From the study's perspective, adults with serum sodium levels above 152 mEq/L were the most likely to develop chronic diseases, while adults with levels between 138-140 mEq/L were the least likely. From a real-world perspective, the National Academies of Medicine recommends drinking 6-9 cups (8-oz. per cup) of fluids daily if you're a woman, and 8-12 cup daily if you're a man. "Fluids" means water or a liquid with high water content. Your activity level / exercise habits and other variables may increase your hydration needs.

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