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Hydration: Water-Rich Foods Make a Difference

As the summer heat builds, it is essential to keep hydrated. And, while most of us know that we should drink eight glasses of water daily, how we get our fluids doesn't have to be all from plain water. Fruits and vegetables can also protect against dehydration.

Our bodies need water to support body functions. For digestion, water is in our saliva to moisten food, in our stomach juices to digest food, in our blood to transport nutrients and oxygen, and to help carry waste out of our body. Water also allows us to regulate body temperature, improve energy, and brain function. Mild dehydration can cause fatigue, headaches, decreased physical endurance, and cognitive performance.

To keep from getting dehydrated, you need to drink 6 to 8 cups of liquid each day. Depending on your activity level, you may need to drink more. Older people may be less sensitive to thirst, meaning that they may not feel thirsty, which can cause them not to drink enough water.

Getting that liquid from fruits, vegetables, and liquids other than water can contribute to your total fluid intake. Select foods that are more than 80%. Check the list below to see the percentage of water in some of your favorite fruits and vegetables.

Cucumbers: 96%
Celery: 95%
Lettuce: 95%
Tomatoes: 94%
Zucchini and summer squash: 94%
Bell peppers: 92-94%
Watermelon: 92%
Broccoli: 91%
Grapefruit: 91%

Incorporating more fruits and vegetables into your diet can also improve overall health. To snack smart, keep cut-up fruits like watermelon, cucumbers, or citrus in the refrigerator for a quick bite. Use fruit and leafy green vegetables in smoothies for a hydrating breakfast—jazz up your water with slices of fruit like lemon, limes, or berries to enhance flavor.

Keeping yourself hydrated is an easy way to stay healthy; it doesn't all have to come from plain water. Eating more fruit and vegetables will improve your health and keep you hydrated during the hot summer months.

Citrus Berry Mint Infused Water

Ingredients (for 1 large pitcher, about 6–8 cups):

- 1/2 orange, thinly sliced
- 1/2 lemon, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup strawberries, hulled and halved
- A few fresh mint leaves (5–7)
- 6–8 cups cold water
- Ice (optional)