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Too hot to handle?

By Carole Spiers (Pressure Gauge)

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DURING THE last two weeks of July, I have, like everyone else, been careful to avoid the searing heat of Dubai's summer. However, my schedule still included making a presentation on behalf of TiE Dubai on the topic 'Change Is Inevitable -

Growth Is Your Challenge'; in addition to providing high-performance executive coaching to industry leaders and CEOs on a range of challenges facing business in the Gulf, today. Fortunately, these sessions all took place in air-conditioned hotels or offices!

Drink More Water Than You Think You Need!

People can sweat a lot in very hot weather, and if the body loses too much liquid or salt, this can result in heat exhaustion, some of the most common symptoms of which include nausea and vomiting, feeling light-headed, tiredness, headache and muscle cramps.

If someone with heat exhaustion fails to deal with the situation, their body's cooling mechanisms may no longer function properly, leading their body temperature to rise, and resulting in symptoms including confusion, disorientation and fits.

If left untreated, the person may slip into a coma or even die as a result of heart or kidney failure, or brain damage caused by the excess body heat.

Your body loses more than a litre of water a day through sweat alone, so my advice is to drink at least two litres of water per day - and that's excluding caffeinated, carbonated and alcoholic drinks, all of which can act as diuretics and lead to even greater dehydration.

Water is absolutely essential for your body to operate efficiently. In addition to temperature regulation this includes nerve impulse conduction, circulation, metabolism, the immune system, eliminative processes, sensory awareness and perceptive thinking.

It only takes a 1 per cent fluid loss for the body to become dehydrated, and insufficient water can seriously disrupt the body's biochemistry - without any conscious sensation of being thirsty.

Look After Your Body, So It Can Look After You

Stress can also influence the amount of water available to the body's systems, and at times of stress a well balanced diet is essential in preserving health:

1. **Alcohol:** When taken in moderation, alcohol has been shown to benefit the cardiovascular system. Many people, however, take alcohol to combat stress, but by doing so make matters worse. Alcohol is a depressant, and excess alcohol increases fat deposits in the body and decreases the immune function. It also reduces the ability of the liver to remove toxins from the body.
2. **Caffeine:** Caffeine intake should be limited, as this can 'kick start' the stress reaction. When taken in moderation, caffeine can increase alertness. However, consuming an excess of caffeine can be addictive and lead to irritability, sleeplessness and impatience.
3. **Carbohydrates:** Complex carbohydrates such as rice, pasta, potatoes and bread result in a slow release of energy, which is important in maintaining a constant blood sugar level. Carbohydrates also trigger the release of the powerful neurotransmitter serotonin, which has an important role in the maintenance of mood control.
4. **Fat:** Avoid the consumption of foods rich in animal (saturated) fats that cause obesity and increase cholesterol levels. Both these factors adversely impact the cardiovascular system and are a contributing factor in coronary heart disease.
5. **Fibre:** Fruits, vegetables and grains are excellent sources of fibre. These bulking agents are important for a healthy digestive system and it is recommended that a normal diet should include at least 25 grams of fibre per day.
6. **Sugar:** Sugar has no essential nutrients and it provides a short-term boost of energy to the body, resulting in excess fat deposits. High sugar consumption over time can lead to overweight, glucose intolerance and, eventually, type 2 diabetes.
7. **Salt:** The consumption of 'convenience' foods should be kept to a minimum, as most contain either large amounts of sugar, salt, fat and/or preservatives. Salt increases blood pressure, affects the adrenal gland and causes dehydration, thirst and possible emotional instability. Sufferers from stress should use a low salt substitute that has potassium rather than sodium, and avoid junk foods high in salt such as ham, pickles, sausages, burgers etc.
8. **Vegetables:** Always, (but particularly during stressful periods), eat food that is high in Vitamin B (wholemeal bread, whole grains, pasta and jacket potatoes) and Vitamin C (fresh fruit and vegetables). Green, yellow and orange vegetables are all rich in minerals, vitamins and phytochemicals that boost immune response and protect against disease.

There are many more aspects to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and this is a subject that I'll be returning to again in

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There are many more aspects to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and this is a subject that I'll be returning to again in future Pressure Gauge articles.

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- It only takes a 1 per cent fluid loss for the body to become dehydrated, and insufficient water can seriously disrupt the body's biochemistry
- Stress can also influence the amount of water available to the body's systems.

- Always, but particularly during times of stress, a well balanced diet is essential in preserving health
- A diet rich in vitamins B and C helps boosts your immune system and protects against disease.

Carole Spiers, the UK's leading Guru on corporate stress-management and organisational change, is also a regular BBC broadcaster and international author on these major, business issues. She is also a regular motivational speaker at UAE conferences. Your questions and input on this article or any related topic, is welcomed. Each Friday, we will discuss a selection of your letters or case studies. Please write to Carole Spiers at: ktwkd@emirates.net.ae. Website: www.carolespiersgroup.com

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