

# The wonder of water and weight

Studies suggest increasing water intake, breaking sedentary cycle could shed the kilograms

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**D**RINKING plain water, not the bubbly or flavoured kind, can help kick sugar and salt habits, a new study found – but equally as important diabetes educator and dietician Hamish van Wyk said – is to get up to refill your water bottle.

The first study was published in the *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* this month and written by University of Illinois kinesiology and community health professor Ruopeng An.

He and his research team had a look at the dietary habits of more than 18 300 adults in the US and found that those who drank more water, ate less and also consumed less saturated fat, sugar and salt.

"The impact of plain water intake on a diet was similar across race/ethnicity, education and income levels and body weight status," An said.

Van Wyk said that while water is important, the increasing sedentary lives of the workforce is also a concern as most people are now spending eight or more hours a day at a desk.

A study in 2012 looked at changes in physical activity from various countries around the world.

He said the study found that most people are spending their work day sitting down and this could have an adverse effect on their health – even if they go to gym afterwards.

He said according to a guideline from the American Diabetes Association "evidence supports that all individuals, including those with diabetes, should be encouraged to reduce sedentary time, particularly by breaking up extended amounts of time [longer than 90 minutes] spent sitting".

"I definitely do not break up my 'sitting time' every 90 minutes!" Van Wyk said.

"I found a study that showed people who sit more, tend to carry more weight around their stomach and in their liver, even if they were physically active the rest of the day. Fat around the abdomen and in the liver is extremely unhealthy and increases the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and heart disease.

"A study published in January also showed that the risk of diabetes increased by 22% for every hour spent sitting. The risk of diabetes

was seen even when people were active elsewhere in their day."

He said while some studies suggest that people take a walk every now and again to break up sitting for too long, another study found that simply standing up also helped.

"So, deliberately standing once in a while is something I could possibly do.

"If I get this right, is there not something else I can also do during my standing or walking time that will help keep the weight off my middle and improve my health further? What do I have at work that could assist me?

"There's a water cooler at work. I don't nearly meet the guideline of between 2.7 and 3.7 litres of water for women and men respectively. I'm often so busy that the thought of drinking water is the last thing on my mind," Van Wyk said.

"Walking to the water cooler does, however, seem a lot more practical than just standing around or walking in circles around my desk. In addition, if I'm drinking my suggested quota of water, I will be forced to take a walk to the restroom once in a while," he said.

"So this brings me to my second question: Can drinking water help keep my weight controlled? Water has no calories, so it won't make me put on weight – that's a good start (But, remember that flavoured waters often contain sugars, so please read the label before you start drinking more of these beverages).

"Back to the question. I found a study that concluded that women who increased their water intake to more than 1 litre a day lost 2.2kg more than those who drank less than 1 litre a day. This effect was seen even after accounting for what they ate and how physically active they were.

"A possible explanation for this came from another study showing that an additional 1.5 litres of daily water intake may increase your metabolism, burning an extra 200kJ a day. The authors theorised that this will result in 2.4kg in weight loss over a year.

"A further study offers another possible explanation – this study evaluated if giving people 500ml of water before breakfast, lunch and supper would result in weight loss. Interestingly, the group who consumed the additional water, lost 2kg more than those who did not.

"The study concluded that water keeps people feeling full and therefore they eat less at a meal. In short, it appears that water helps with weight loss, either by increasing your metabolism and/or by reducing the amount you eat."



**KEEP ON WALKING:** Taking a walk to the water tower at work will be a great step towards improving your overall health and lower the risk of diabetes

Formula to ensure you get enough water in

PERSONAL trainer and health coach Tanya Wyatt said to check if she or her clients are drinking enough water she is using a formula designed by Dr Fereydoon Batmanghelidj.

"Generally, since most people eat a diet quite high in processed food, they have a higher need for water initially.

"As they bring more 'real' food in, particularly water-dense foods like salad and vegetables, they can start to rely on thirst sensations to indicate when they should be hydrating themselves.

The formula suggested by Batmanghelidj is  $0.033 \times \text{weight in kg}$  will give total water intake in L (e.g.  $0.033 \times 60\text{kg} = 1.98\text{L}$ ).

Wyatt said she does not recommend that people drink tap water.

"It is generally high in chlorine, which is understood to form carcinogenic compounds, Trihalomethanes, when it comes into contact with organic matter [which is its purpose in municipal treatment of water].

"I would, instead, recommend either buying a filter that removes chlorine, or buying pre-filtered water from a reputable water shop.

Wyatt said she has seen what a big difference drinking enough water makes.

"You see people's energy levels shoot up, their skin improves, they lose weight and their cellulite improves."