

- Dehydration

How to handle heatwave hydration

KATIE WRIGHT gets some expert advice on how to beat the thirst as the summer really heats up

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THE heat is on with temperatures forecast to reach the high 20s across large parts of the UK this week.



While there's lots to enjoy about warm weather, a heatwave can also bring sleepless nights, sunburn and dehydration.

"The body functions best at a certain temperature and when that temperature rises, we start sweating and losing fluids, which is our body's natural reaction in an attempt to cool down," explains Dr Ross Perry, GP and medical director of Cosmedics (cosmedics.co.uk).

"When we sweat excessively, it can lead to dehydration which can become dangerous, therefore it's important to stay hydrated to keep our bodies working and healthy.

How do you know if you're at risk of dehydration?

"Signs of being dehydrated include headaches, dizziness, dry mouth, tiredness, occasionally nausea and low blood pressure," Dr Perry says.

Drinking enough water is the obvious solution – the NHS recommends six to eight glasses per day for an adult – but what if you're not in the habit of sipping so much? Or you don't like the taste of water?

Here, doctors share five ways to make sure you stay hydrated during a heatwave...

Don't wait until you're thirsty

"Stay ahead of your thirst by recognising your own feelings of thirst, such as a dry mouth or feeling lethargic, and aim to drink to avoid them rather than to treat them," says Dr Perry.

"Don't wait until you're thirsty to reach for a drink, sip water continuously throughout the day and when you wake up during the night."

Dr Sanjay Mehta, GP at the London

General Practice (thelondongeneralpractice.com), says: "Keep a bottle of water or a suitable alternative on you throughout the day."

During a heatwave, he recommends: "Be even more vigilant and aware of your intake volume, and try to drink at least 20% above your usual intake to compensate for fluid loss through sweat."

Peek at your pee

“The darker it looks, the more water you need to be consuming,” Dr Perry says. “Keep an eye on the colour and smell. If it’s yellow-looking with a strong smell, the chances are you’re dehydrated”

Eat hydrating snacks

You can increase your intake by munching snacks with a high water content.

Dr Perry says: “Think berries, watermelon, nectarines, and peaches, which are all packed full of water, rather than carb-laden foods which can be packed full of salt and make you feel more thirsty.”

Add some flavour

Fizzy drinks and squash can be high in sugar, so choose flavoured drinks carefully. Dr Perry suggests “flavouring your water to make it more enjoyable, add slices of lemon, cucumber, or strawberries”.

This can be helpful for getting children to drink more, too.

Milk is also a good choice, as it’s “more hydrating than water or sports drinks, due to its source of protein, carbohydrates, calcium, and electrolytes”.

Limit caffeine

Caffeinated drinks aren’t as dehydrating as you might think – as long as they’re consumed alongside water. Dr Perry says: “Coffee and tea are fine to drink to stay hydrated, just make sure you’re not having too much caffeine throughout the day.”