

Beyond Blocks and Bricks

Number Twelve

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Definitely Beyond Blocks and Bricks—Gauging Hydration

Today's snail-mail included a news bulletin from a physical therapy practice which addressed dehydration. The writer offered a relatively objective way to gauge the level of hydration (or dehydration). The indicator is the color of a person's urine. Intrigued, and not completely convinced, I did some research and found the attached article.

The web site is <http://www.urinecolors.com/dehydration.php>.

I have not worked up the courage to click on the link to "Blue Urine Color."

I categorically deny any interest of any kind in the link titled "Fun with pee."

Are you dehydrated?

What can your urine color tell you about your hydration? At what point are you dehydrated? How do keep from dehydrating? It's so important that you learn the dehydration symptoms no matter what you do as a profession. Learning the dehydration signs and how to treat someone who is dehydrated can save a life, perhaps even your own.

What does it mean if you see a dark yellow urine color? Typically, this can be a sign that you are not drinking enough water. Are you dehydrated? How much water have you drunk for the day? In general, you should be drinking 8 glasses of water a day. If you're working out and sweating, you'll want to drink additional water. If you do not drink enough water, then your urine becomes over-concentrated with waste, which is why it is a darker yellow urine color. But how do you know if you're dehydrated? What does it mean to be dehydrated?

What are the signs of dehydration?

In general, most people consider urine color to be a sign of dehydration. The darker your urine, the more dehydrated you might be. At the very least, urine color can be an early indicator of dehydration. Now, while your urine color can be used as a guide to know your level of dehydration, it is only one of the symptoms, there are other symptoms of dehydration you will want to watch for as well.

Do you have a headache? Do you feel dizzy? Both are signs of early dehydration. Other signs to watch for are nausea, weakness, fatigue, walking funny or unsteadily and muscle cramps.

If you notice any of these symptoms, especially with an abnormally dark urine color you should immediately take the following steps.

- Stop your activity and get out of the sun.
- Loosen your clothes.
- Sit down and rest.
- Take sips of water.

Even though you're worried about dehydration, don't gulp the water to replenish your body; it can make you sick. You want to slowly add the water back to your body to prevent dehydration. At this stage, it may still be early and not severe as long as you watch the symptoms of dehydration and respond accordingly. You may still want to call for medical attention especially if the symptoms get worse.

Now when dehydration gets worse, you'll see some very obvious and scary signs.

- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Agitation
- High body temperature
- Convulsions
- Unresponsiveness

How to treat dehydration

If you notice any of these symptoms of dehydration, your goal is to cool the person down and seek emergency help. Take the following steps:

- Call an ambulance
- Lay person in the shade and elevate their feet
- Give sips of water if the person is conscious
- Remove clothing as much as possible
- Pour cold water over the person
- Apply ice to skin to help cool their body
- Monitor breathing

Chances are, if you are the one suffering dehydration, you'll need someone else to help you, but if you're by yourself, hopefully you can at least get yourself out of the sun, call for help and get some water.

What are the causes of dehydration?

Now, of course, exercise and sun exposure are not the only reasons for dehydration. Anytime you lose fluid from your body and don't replenish the fluids, you can get dehydrated. Illness is another common reason people get dehydrated. When you are sick and experiencing diarrhea and vomiting, you expel a lot of body fluids. It can be difficult to replace these fluids if you continue to be sick and/or find yourself getting sick from ingesting any food or water. If you are sick and vomiting, it is best to sip water slowly over time.

Other causes of dehydration can vary. **Taking any stimulants, such as caffeine or more severe stimulants can cause your body to lose fluids. So a cup of coffee or a cola are not recommended drinks to replenish your body fluids. Any sugary drink for that matter is not a good way to quench your thirst and prevent dehydration. This is because for every molecule of sugar, it takes a molecule of water to break it down.** The best cure for dehydration is drinking water. However, if you have sports drinks and other fluids designed for re-hydrating that body, those can work even better since they also replace electrolytes.

The following Dehydration Urine Color Chart will help you use your urine color as an indicator of your level of dehydration and what actions you should take to help return your body back to a normal level of hydration.

Dehydration Urine Color Chart	
	Doing ok. You're probably well hydrated. Drink water as normal.
	You're just fine. You could stand to drink a little water now, maybe a small glass of water.
	Drink about 1/2 bottle of water (1/4 liter) within the hour, or drink a whole bottle (1/2 liter) of water if you're outside and/or sweating.
	Drink about 1/2 bottle of water (1/4 liter) right now, or drink a whole bottle (1/2 liter) of water if you're outside and/or sweating.



Drink 2 bottles of water right now (1 liter). If your urine is darker than this and/or red or brown, then dehydration may not be your problem. See a doctor.