



Water, My Most Important Nutrient

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Water deprivation kills faster than lack of any other nutrient.

—Linda Boeckner and Kay McKinzie
“Water: The Nutrient”

“I can’t stand it much longer,” said Emily. “Really! It tastes like mud, looks like mud, and smells like mud—mud gone bad. Okay, I know California is having the worst drought in memory, but what is coming through my taps is completely unacceptable. They say it’s not harmful to drink, but it changed the color of the soup I made for lunch for heaven’s sake, to say nothing of the last load of clothes I put through the washer.”

I watched her pace the floor, nodding in sympathy. The local news had been carrying complaints about water quality from consumers all over the Bay area.

“My husband just went out to buy several cases of bottled water,” Emily continued, “but it’s not cheap. And then there’s that stuff about something or other leaching out of the plastic and into the water. You know,” she paused briefly, “I gave up colas several years ago, but perhaps it’s time to relapse.” Cracking herself up, this comment was followed by her peals of laughter.

“I hope you choose to avoid relapsing,” I said, smiling. “You already know that colas are loaded with sugar. A 12-ounce can contains nearly 40 grams of sugar and, at 4 calories per gram of sugar, that’s a hefty load of ‘empty calories.’ To say nothing of its being toxic to the brain.”

“Well, there’s always orange juice and lemonade and apple juice,” Emily retorted.

“Just because a beverage is labeled ‘juice’ doesn’t mean the drink is not sugary. Eight ounces of any one of those averages between 7-8 sugar cubes—about the same per ounce as colas,” I explained.

Emily groaned. “May as well stop by the Golden Arches and grab a medium chocolate shake, I guess.”

“You do know that reports put the sugar content of a medium chocolate shake at more than an entire pint of ice cream?”

“I know, I know,” said Emily, “but I have to drink *something*. I admit that ingredients in ‘diet drinks’ are undesirable. So, what are you drinking?”

“Water,” I replied. “Just water. According to the authors of an article entitled *Water: The Nutrient*, water deprivation kills faster than lack of any other nutrient, so I consider water my most important nutrient.” Emily’s expression made me smile.

“Nutrient?” asked Emily, sounding puzzled. “What exactly is a nutrient? I thought it was food.”

“Definitions vary depending on the source. Commonly a nutrient is defined as a substance that nourishes a living being. Water, as a nutrient, nourishes not only living beings but also living plants. It definitely doesn’t do much for my *silk* plants,” I added, chuckling. “Some sources list water as 1 of 6 main types of nutrients that the body acquires from food. The other 5 are carbohydrates (including fiber), proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals. Of all these nutrients, lack of water is the most immediate concern for survival, since dehydration can become life threatening in a matter of days. Typically, you can go longer without food than you can without water. According to Claude Piantadosi of Duke University, a human can go about 100 hours without drinking water if the temperature outdoors is average. If it’s cooler, he or she can go a little longer. When exposed to direct sunlight, it’s less. Water is so important that dehydration causing a loss of more than 10 percent of your body weight is classified as a medical emergency.”

Under normal conditions, the body is about two-thirds water and the brain over three-fourths water.

“Wow. A 100 hours is only about 4 days,” said Emily. “I mean, I knew water was important. But I didn’t realize it was so critical. What does water do for you, anyway?”

“Water forms the major component of most body parts. It is needed to make saliva, manufacture hormones and neurotransmitters, lubricate joints, regulate body temperature, flush out body waste, keep membranes moist, digest food, and deliver oxygen via the blood to the brain and body organs. Water acts as a shock absorber for the brain and spinal cord. Also, it helps with the process of cell division and replication . . .”



“Stop, stop!” cried Emily, throwing her hands in the air. “I never, but *never* realized how important water is. So, what are you doing in this drought?”

“Drinking water,” I answered, calmly.

“How can you stand the taste and the smell, never mind the way it looks or feels in your mouth?” asked Emily.

“Oh, I’m drinking water from my water purifier,” I explained.

“But I thought water purifiers were really expensive,” said Emily.

“There are several good brands available and prices vary, but my favorite is ‘ION Thrive.’ Ion Thrive filters, purifies but leaves the minerals. I know individuals who say they have more than paid for theirs by what they saved from no longer purchasing canned and bottled beverages and bottled water. With water being the major component of my brain and body, I consider it my most important nutrient.”

“Thanks for listening to me whine,” said Emily, smiling. “I’m off to investigate water purifier. I guess water is also *my* most important nutrient, too.”

I knew both Emily’s body and brain would enjoy her new nutrient-friendly purchase. After all, she *does* have to drink *something*.

