

Water: Lifesaving or Fatal?

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Short Communication

The animate needs water to survive and human being is not an exception; however, it could be fatal in some circumstances. Quantity and quality of the consumed water as well as time, place, habit, health status, and individual characteristics contribute to daily water need.

According to Avicenna's viewpoint, drinking too much water and/or drinking water without thirst is harmful for the body [1]. Avicenna cited that the person who drink too cold water would see the side effects of this unhealthy habit sooner or later, although may not feel any discomfort or illness at the time. "Drink to thirst" is considered a consensus versus to "drink to max" in order to prevent exercise-induced hyponatremia [2]. There is a similar statement in traditional Persian medicine (TPM) sources that emphasizes the importance of drinking in the time of true thirst up to quench it and not more.

Middle-aged men and young women marathon runners are in the risk of fatal hyponatremic encephalopathy due to water intoxication [2]. Arginine vasopressin secretion in response to inflammation caused by exercise-induced muscle injury, followed by drinking too much water, contributes to severe hyponatremic encephalopathy. In this condition kidney fails to excrete free water excess and it leads to fatal hyponatremia [2].

People who cares about their daily water intake usually find that there is a relation between their urine colour and water intake. This relation has been confirmed in a recent study by quantitative analysis [3].

Avicenna mentioned in Canon of medicine that people possess a unique temperament (Meraj) depending on their age, sex, habits, occupation, season, and place [4]. According to TPM sources, there are 6 principles for a healthy life including air, water and food, sleep and wake, activity and rest, retention and depletion as well as mental states. A person who wants to live in a healthy way should inevitably observe

these 6 principles altogether. Any disturbance in each one of them leads to disturbance of the others and developing disease [4]. For instance, the mental states including happiness, sorrow, rage, anxious, and shame affects drinking and eating while quality and quantity of drinking and eating may affect the mental states. Colleen et al. found that more water intake in young females is accompanied with better mood [5].

Avicenna cited that the predominance of dryness in body specifically in central nervous system causes insomnia, binge eating, irritability, and compulsiveness while the predominance of wetness causes calmness and easement [6]. Whereas the women are more wet than men [7], physiologically they need more water than men to maintain a healthy life and for the same reason they are more vulnerable to water deficit as mentioned by TPM sages [6].

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