



**Independence  
Blue Cross**

## WALKING TOWARDS WELLNESS



### Water—The Essential Nutrient

On average, an adult's body weight is made up of about 10 to 12 gallons of water (about 55 to 75 percent of body weight). An elderly person's body weight is only about half water. But, when exposed to extremely high temperatures, your body requires even more water to maintain its normal temperature. And the average adult loses about 2 1/2 quarts (about 10 cups) of water daily through perspiration, breathing and other body functions. When an individual participates in an exercise program, they should know the signs of dehydration.

#### **What are the signs of dehydration?**

The effects of the body's loss of water are progressive: thirst, fatigue and weakness followed by delirium and possibly death. Though dehydration typically won't happen over the course of a single day, it is important to pay attention to signals of water loss and minimize risk of dehydration by drinking plenty of fluids throughout the day—before thirst sets in.

#### **How much water should you drink? What else could you drink?**

Of course the most important fluid to consume is plain water, at least 8 – 12 (8oz) cups per day. If you are physically active, you should add 1 – 3 cups for each hour of activity. If you prefer a flavored beverage, milk and fruit juice are good options that provide other nutrients or try sports drinks or decaffeinated beverages.

#### **What fluids should you avoid?**

Caffeine and alcoholic beverages have a diuretic effect and promote water loss which can contribute to dehydration.

#### **What should you do?**

Overall, cool refreshing drinks can help lower your body's temperature. But remember, it's harder to cool down in hot, humid weather because perspiration doesn't evaporate as quickly as it does in hot, dry weather.

#### ***You should remember to:***

- Drink lots of water!
- Carry a water bottle.
- Avoid caffeine and alcoholic beverages.

#### ***Enjoy your walk!***