

## Hydration: Issues for the 21st Century

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*Historically, hydration research reflected critical issues of the day. War, illness, surviving a shipwreck or time in the desert, supplying fall-out shelters, and space exploration drove hydration research in the first half of the 20th century. The fitness revolution of the 1970s spurred research on dehydration in physically active people and athletes. The 1990s introduced the “fluid/disease relationship.” What will be the driving force behind hydration research in the 21st century? Where are the gaps in our knowledge? This review provides an overview of issues pertinent to determining future directions in hydration research.*

**Key words:** hydration, dehydration, fluid requirements, fluid and electrolyte balance

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### Introduction

How much fluid do healthy adults require daily? How does one measure hydration status? How do age, environment, physical activity, and other factors affect fluid needs? Is there an optimal fluid intake beyond that needed for water balance? Do foods and beverages differ in their contribution to water balance? Whereas limited scientific evidence exists to answer these questions, guidance abounds. There exist myriad recommendations ranging from those that are based on research, to expert opinion, to “best guesses,” to pure myth. It is worthwhile, therefore, to strive for a more complete scientific underpinning to these and other pertinent questions.

The purpose of this article is to review the scientific literature on selected hydration issues and to stimulate discussion. For purposes of comparison, special popula-

tions and situations will be mentioned, but the paper’s primary focus is the healthy adult who is not under physiologic or thermal stress. The paper begins with a brief overview of fluid and electrolyte balance/imbalance, but the reader is referred to other publications for an in-depth review of fluid and electrolyte balance and perturbations thereof.<sup>1–3</sup> The selected topics reviewed here include methods and indicators commonly used to measure hydration status, consumption data, recommendations for daily intake, and fluid intake as it relates to disease.

### Water Balance

Water balance is defined as a balance between water input and water output.<sup>4</sup> Total body water is tightly controlled with sensitive mechanisms that respond to changes in consumption and losses. The regulation of both the total water content and the electrolyte content of the body is achieved primarily by the kidney via feedback mechanisms capable of sensing a one to two percent change in tonicity.<sup>5</sup>

### Water Output

Water loss (or output) consists mainly of urine, insensible losses, sweat, and fecal loss. The minimal amount of fluid loss from the body that can occur is referred to as the obligatory water loss. An obligatory urine loss occurs because of the need to remove various solutes from the body. The minimum water required for urine is dependent on the daily solute excretory load, primarily determined by diet, and the maximum urinary concentration achievable.<sup>5,6</sup> Urinary concentrating ability varies with age<sup>7,8</sup> and with renal disease. Under normal conditions, fecal water loss is quite small, estimated at about 100 mL/day.<sup>9,10</sup>

Water that passes through the skin (transepidermal diffusion) and is lost by evaporation, and water that is lost from the respiratory tract, is referred to as insensible water loss. Insensible water correlates with metabolic heat dissipation.<sup>11,12</sup> The estimate of insensible water loss has been shown to vary more in infants than in adults,<sup>13</sup> but Holliday and Segar<sup>14</sup> proposed an average

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water loss of 50 mL/100 kcal to apply to all ages. Even when caloric expenditure and body surface area are equal, however, insensible water loss through the skin and lungs varies. Environmental temperature and humidity, altitude, volume of air inspired, air currents, clothing, blood circulation through skin, and water content of the body can all affect insensible water loss.<sup>15</sup>

Water loss via sweating is usually low in temperate, sedentary conditions, but profuse sweating can be a major source of water and electrolyte loss for persons exercising or laboring in extreme heat and/or humidity. In physically active individuals, sweating presents the most highly variable water loss. Sweat rates can reach 3 to 4 L/hour, with variation in sweat rate depending upon exercise intensity and duration, age, gender, training, heat acclimatization, air temperature, humidity, wind velocity, cloud cover, clothing, and individual sweat rate.<sup>16</sup> Total daily fluid requirements have been shown to range from as little as 2 L/day to 16 L/day depending on the work load and the level of heat stress.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the most significant conclusion that can be drawn from an examination of water output is the magnitude of its variability. Nonetheless, for purposes of pedagogy, it is common to describe or depict the daily water output of humans. Tables and figures representing “average” daily water output abound, reporting volumes ranging from 1500 to 3000 mL/day.<sup>9,10,16,18–28</sup> Contrary to familiar depictions of daily output, the literature reviewed for this paper yielded only one primary reference reporting total water output in a healthy adult under temperate conditions. A study published in 1930<sup>29</sup> reported five days of total intake and output data on one sedentary 60-kg male subject confined to the laboratory. The average output was 2675 mL, ranging from 2227 mL to 3205 mL. Insensible loss remained fairly constant (1073–1213 mL), whereas urine water ranged from 1149 to 2132 mL. As such, some of the commonly referenced average output values are much lower than this 60-kg male’s documented output. Nonetheless, the wide range of average daily output reported appears to capture the variability within and among individuals.

## Fluid Intake

Water intake includes fluid consumed as food and beverages, along with relatively small volumes of water created by oxidation of food (metabolic water) and breakdown of body tissue. Unlike output, intake is not tightly regulated. Many physiologic, psychological, and environmental factors influence the drinking behavior of humans. Certainly, water deficit is one,<sup>30</sup> but drinking behavior is also influenced by many factors other than fluid deficit, such as culture, sensory qualities of the beverages, availability, and convenience.<sup>31</sup> Thirst is the primary homeostatic mechanism that stimulates adequate

drinking to replace fluid losses. Under normal conditions, when a variety of foods and drinks are available, voluntary fluid ingestion tends to exceed the volume necessary for fluid balance.<sup>32</sup> However, responding to thirst (i.e., drinking “ad libitum”) is insensitive during conditions of physiologic stress.<sup>33,34</sup> This lack of thirst leads to the phenomenon called voluntary dehydration, defined as the delay in complete rehydration following body water loss. Voluntary dehydration (or “involuntary dehydration,” terminology considered more appropriate by Greenleaf<sup>35,36</sup>) has been extensively described, but less is understood about its mechanisms.<sup>37–42</sup> Fluid unavailability, inadequate time to drink, lack of food intake, and unpalatable fluids can compound the delay in rehydration.<sup>41–43</sup>

## Disorders in Fluid-Electrolyte Balance

The body strives to maintain fluid and electrolyte homeostasis despite wide variations in intake and losses. Nonetheless, physical, behavioral, and environmental conditions can surpass the limits of homeostatic mechanisms, resulting in fluid and electrolyte imbalances. Fluid imbalances are defined based on the amount of salt lost or gained in relation to water.

### Dehydration

Varying ratios of fluid and electrolyte loss result in isotonic dehydration, hypertonic dehydration, and hypotonic dehydration.<sup>44</sup> Fluid and electrolyte losses originate from extracellular fluid (ECF). ECF includes plasma and interstitial fluid. Losses of intracellular fluid occur as a result of ECF hypertonicity pulling fluid from the cell. Table 1 outlines the aberration and potential etiologies of the aforementioned classifications of dehydration.

### Water Intoxication/Hyponatremia

The importance of consuming adequate fluids to avoid dehydration has been aggressively communicated to physically active people. However, the importance of fluid consumption has, in some cases, overshadowed the risk of consuming too much water, which can lead to hyponatremia. This type of hyponatremia (serum sodium <130–135 mmol/L)<sup>45</sup> occurs when the individual, in an effort to avoid heat illness, diligently consumes copious amounts of water while consuming inadequate sodium. The condition has been reported to occur primarily during prolonged exertion, such as ultra marathons, recreational hiking, and military training.<sup>46</sup> If severe, hyponatremia leads to lung congestion and brain swelling.<sup>45</sup> Central nervous system symptoms include headache, fatigue, anorexia, lethargy, confusion, disorientation, hyper-irritability, nausea, vomiting, seizures, and coma. Musculoskeletal symptoms include cramps, muscle twitching, and weakness. Ironically, the symptoms

**Table 1.** Classifications of Dehydration

Type	Aberration	Potential Causes
Isotonic Dehydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Isotonic loss of water and salt from ECF</li> <li>▪ Does not cause osmotic water shift from ICF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gastrointestinal fluid losses (vomiting, diarrhea, gastrointestinal ostomy output)</li> <li>▪ Inadequate fluid and salt intake</li> </ul>
Hypertonic Dehydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Water loss exceeds salt loss</li> <li>▪ Osmotic shift of water from cells into ECF (plasma and interstitial)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inadequate water intake</li> <li>▪ Sweat loss</li> <li>▪ Osmotic diuresis (glucosuria)</li> <li>▪ Diuretic therapy (if water intake is inadequate)</li> </ul>
Hypotonic Dehydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More sodium lost than water</li> <li>▪ Osmotic shift of water from ECF (plasma and interstitial) into cells</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of sweat or other gastrointestinal fluid losses</li> <li>▪ Water replacement without salt replacement</li> <li>▪ Diuretic therapy (if free water intake is excessive)</li> </ul>

ECF = extracellular fluid, ICF = intracellular fluid.

mimic heat illness, and if treated as dehydration, the situation worsens. Rapid correction of chronic hyponatremia may be dangerous leading to brain edema and seizures. In most cases, hyponatremia can be corrected with no long-term sequelae, but in extreme cases of water overload, called water intoxication, the situation is fatal.<sup>45,46</sup> Additional articles are available for a more in-depth discussion of hyponatremia.<sup>45,47,48</sup>

### Assessing Hydration Status

Historically, assessment of hydration status has occurred in the context of clinical medicine, the military and sport, wherein significant changes in hydration status are measured with overt biochemical markers and symptoms. The “absence” of dehydration or hyperhydration, however, is not readily measured. Instead, normal hydration status has been the presumed condition of healthy individuals. As such, very little research has been conducted in the area of assessing normal hydration status.

Minor perturbations in hydration status are difficult to measure.<sup>49,50</sup> Because the body is constantly striving to preserve plasma volume and regain homeostasis, biomarkers are transient at any point during the process of dehydration and rehydration. As such, sensitivity of a given biomarker will vary based on the duration and severity of dehydration.<sup>51,52</sup> Investigators have repeatedly attempted to measure hydration status using biochemical markers<sup>51–60</sup> but none has identified an unequivocal correlate with acute, small changes in body weight.

### Body Weight

In those who are consuming adequate diets, an acute (up to 72 hours) change in body weight will be due almost solely to a change in total body water.<sup>3</sup> Hence, serial measurement of body weight is a sensitive, accurate, straightforward, and affordable indicator of hydration status that is used universally.<sup>3,24,49–52,54,56,58–63</sup>

### Urine

Urine is commonly used to assess hydration status.<sup>51–54,59,64</sup> Urinary measures such as specific gravity and osmolality have been reported to be more indicative of non-acute moderate levels of impending or actual hypohydration than are blood measurements such as hematocrit, serum osmolality, or plasma sodium.<sup>51,53,55</sup> For example, military personnel, studied over a period of 44 days, who were in a state of mild chronic dehydration as determined by >3% weight loss, had normal serum osmolality and hematocrit, but elevated urine specific gravity and creatinine.<sup>51</sup> Urine color has been correlated with urine specific gravity and osmolality in the field setting.<sup>53,54</sup> Urine specific gravity and osmolality have, however, been shown to lag behind plasma osmolality changes during rapid (<4 hours) dehydration (5% body weight).<sup>52</sup> Hence, the validity of urine markers depends on the clinical or research conditions. Additionally, renal function declines with aging; urine volume and concentration are not good indicators of hydration status in older adults.

### Blood

Numerous blood indices such as plasma osmolality, testosterone, adrenaline, noradrenaline, cortisol, atrial natriuretic peptide, aldosterone, urea, sodium, potassium, hematocrit, plasma protein, blood volume, and plasma volume have been used as indicators of hydration status.<sup>49,60,65–68</sup> While osmolality is frequently used, plasma volume may be more sensitive than serum osmolality during dehydration.<sup>60</sup> Similar to urine, the blood parameter chosen as a marker depends on the situation, and corroboration with weight change and clinical signs increases validity of the marker.

### Bioelectrical Impedance and Dilution Techniques

Serial measures of urine, blood, and/or body weight indicate body water change, but do not indicate total

body water (TBW). Improved technologies offer the prospect for assessment of TBW, which would theoretically afford the opportunity, when measured repeatedly, to directly assess changes in hydration status. These technologies include bioelectrical impedance analysis (BIA), bioelectrical impedance spectroscopy (BIS), and dilution techniques. BIA or BIS use electrical current to measure conductivity of the body tissues. Dilution techniques use markers such as antipyrine, deuterium oxide (D<sub>2</sub>O), and titrated water (HTO). Typically, the measure of TBW is not an end in and of itself. Common applications are to predict fat-free mass in the case of BIA, or used in combination with <sup>18</sup>O to predict total energy expenditure, as is the case with deuterium oxide dilution technique. At issue with these methodologies are inconvenience, cost, measurement error, and lack of validation in all populations.<sup>3,67,69,70</sup> The measurement error for the dilution technique is estimated at approximately 1% to 2%.<sup>71</sup> BIA and BIS have been found to vary from the dilution technique by two to three liters.<sup>72,73</sup>

Whereas urine and blood assays remain the cornerstone of clinical assessment of hydration, body weight change remains the most universal, valid, economical, and feasible surrogate for body water change. Impedance and dilution techniques may provide new research opportunities, but have limited practical use. Regardless of the method chosen, assessing hydration status with a series of measures increases the validity of the assessment.

## Fluid Requirements and Recommendations

Reviewing the research designed to define fluid requirements of humans, one has to appreciate the complexity of the issue. A multitude of intra- and inter-individual factors influence water requirements. As stated in the 1989 Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA),<sup>10</sup> establishing a recommendation that meets the needs of all is impossible:

“The primary determinant of maintenance water requirement appears to be metabolic, (Holliday and Segar, 1957) but the actual estimation of water requirement is highly variable and quite complex. Because the water requirement is the amount necessary to balance the insensible losses (which can vary markedly) and maintain a tolerable solute load for the kidneys (which may vary with dietary composition and other factors), it is impossible to set a general water requirement.”

In spite of the impossible nature of assigning a general water requirement, researchers and practitioners have provided guidelines and recommendations. The following brief review of those recommendations is separated into recommendations for special populations (such as hospitalized patients, older adults, and those

who are physically active), and those for adults under normal conditions.

### Special Populations

The advent of parenteral nutrition gave rise to estimations of fluid requirements for acute fluid provision for patients.<sup>14,74–77</sup> Holliday and Segar,<sup>14</sup> based on estimated insensible water loss in controlled environments as determined by Levine et al.<sup>13</sup> and on their assumption of urine solute load on usual parenteral regimens, concluded that “. . . average needs for water expressed in milliliters equals estimated energy expenditure in calories.” The Holliday-Segar formula resulted in the intake recommendation of 1 mL/kcal. This formula, and variations thereof, continues to be the basis for estimating basal fluid requirements in clinical settings.<sup>6,78</sup>

Dehydration is commonly reported in institutionalized elderly.<sup>62,66,79,80</sup> Blunted thirst response, decreased functional status, mobility disorders, voluntary fluid restriction to minimize incontinence, decreased renal concentrating ability, and medications place older adults at risk for dehydration.<sup>62,81,82</sup> The issue appears to be more related to intake than output. In response to this problem, recommendations for adequate fluid intake have been published.<sup>78</sup> By contrast to institutionalized older adults, dehydration in independently living older adults has not been documented.<sup>83–85</sup> Thus, research to date suggests that health status, more than age per se, influences fluid recommendations.

It has long been known that persons under thermal and physiologic stress need to pay special attention to fluid and salt intake.<sup>86–89</sup> Military personnel have been studied extensively in this regard. Monographs and scientific publications present some of the extensive research conducted for purposes of survival and endurance during World War II.<sup>33,34,86,90,91</sup> Scientific findings from the research on military and aerospace personnel continue to provide essential and fundamental information on fluid requirements under conditions of thermal and physiologic stress.<sup>24,92–96</sup> Maintaining hydration status is critical for military.<sup>16,97</sup> The 1985 Military Recommended Dietary Allowances (MRDA) recommend 1 mL of water per kcal during light-to-moderate activity in a temperate climate.<sup>98</sup> Research has shown, however, that requirements may increase up to threefold above normal in conditions of heavy work in a hot environment. Thus, separate recommendations have been established for such conditions.<sup>99,100</sup> Athletes, like military personnel, are a population wherein hydration status is critical to performance. Considerable research has therefore been carried out to explore measurement and consequences of dehydration during physical performance, as well as strategies and recommendations for fluid intake. Athletes are commonly instructed to replace body water lost (measured by change in body weight) during training and

competition with an amount of fluid that is equal to or slightly greater than the amount lost, using the guideline that 1 kg equals 1 L. The reader is referred to the numerous monographs and papers on the subject.<sup>1,101–106</sup>

### Adults Under Normal Conditions

The RDAs, which provide standards for the civilian population, have their roots in national defense. The Food and Nutrition Board (FNB), a part of the National Research Council, was established in 1940 “to advise on nutrition problems in connection with National Defense.”<sup>107</sup> In 1941, the first table of RDAs for nine nutrients and calories was adopted.<sup>108</sup> Water was not addressed. The progression of the RDAs since their inception is summarized in Table 2. The amount of 1 mL water/kcal of energy expenditure has been the recommendation since 1945.<sup>109</sup> In 1989, the FNB added a higher amount: “. . .there is so seldom a risk of water intoxication that the specified requirement for water is often increased to 1.5 mL/kcal to cover variations in activity level, sweating, and solute load.”<sup>10</sup>

Recommendations, however, are not requirements. Absolute requirement is the amount needed to replace losses. Whereas requirements are impossible to predict precisely except under controlled conditions, recommendations such as the RDAs and the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI) are standards to be used in the assessment

and planning of diets for individuals and for groups. There is considerable variation in intakes both within and between individuals, as well as limitations associated with the requirement estimate. Commonly expounded popular recommendations regarding specific amounts of fluid (i.e., eight 8-oz glasses/day) ignore the increasingly diverse diets consumed by North Americans and the impact the diet has on fluid intake. Thus, recommendations are useful for the intended purpose, but are of limited value to the individual unless all variables influencing the individual’s fluid losses (i.e., requirements) are considered concurrently.

### Sources of Water

Survey results show that the majority of individuals’ fluid intake is not consumed as plain water, but instead from a variety of foods and beverages as influenced by cultural, economic, social, environmental, and sensory factors.<sup>10,43</sup> Ershow, Cantor, et al.<sup>114</sup> analyzed data from the 1977–1978 Nationwide Food Consumption Survey (NFCS). They found that water consumed as plain drinking water averaged 31.4% of total intake beverages other than plain water provided 43.6% and food provided 25% of total water intake. The water content of the food portion of the diet can vary widely. For example, whereas the mean intake of water from food for subjects

**Table 2.** Summary of Recommended Dietary Allowances for Water

Date RDA Published	Selected Excerpts
1941 <sup>108</sup>	Water is not mentioned.
1943 <sup>107</sup>	Water is not mentioned.
1945 <sup>109</sup>	“A suitable allowance of water for adults is 2.5 liter daily in most instances. An ordinary standard for diverse person is one milliliter for each calorie of food. Most of this quantity is contained in prepared foods.”
1948 <sup>110</sup>	Reiterates 1945 excerpt shown above.
1953 <sup>111</sup>	Reiterates 1945 excerpt shown above. “Under conditions of extreme heat or excessive sweating, the sensation of thirst may not keep pace with the actual water requirements, and forced intakes up to one liter per hour may be indicated for a short time.”
1958 <sup>112</sup>	“Water requirements are intimately related to salt requirements.” “The requirement of a 70-kg man ingesting 3,200 calories daily is of the order of 2300–3100 milliliters daily.”
1964 <sup>113</sup>	“A reasonable standard for calculating water allowance is 1 ml/calorie of food.”
1968 <sup>21</sup>	“The multitude of factors determining water loss precludes the setting of a general value for minimal water requirement. Under ordinary circumstances, a reasonable allowance is 1 ml/kcal for adults and 1.5 ml/kcal for infants.”
1974 <sup>22</sup>	Reiterates 1968 excerpt.
1980 <sup>23</sup>	Reiterates 1968 excerpt.
1989 <sup>10</sup>	“Adults. For practical purposes, 1 ml/kcal of energy expenditure can be recommended as the water requirement for adults under average conditions of energy expenditure and environmental exposure. However there is so seldom a risk of water intoxication that the specified requirements for water is often increased to 1.5 ml/kcal to cover variations in activity level, sweating and solute load.”

of both sexes, 20 to 64 years of age participating in the 1977–1978 NFCS was 545 gm, the average for the 5th and 99th percentile were 223 and 1254, respectively.<sup>114</sup>

Analysis of data from the 1994–1996 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII) showed that approximately one-third of the total fluid intake of persons aged 20 to 64 years of age was consumed as plain water.<sup>115</sup> Data from the 1994–1996 CSFII<sup>116</sup> also showed that for all subjects the average consumption of milk and other beverages totaled 1115 grams/day. Of that, 35% as coffee and tea, 30% as carbonated soft drinks, 17% as milk, 9% as alcohol, and 9% as fruit drinks and ades.

The perception exists that beverages vary in their capacity to maintain hydration status, with caffeine containing beverages purported to have a diuretic effect. This appears to be based on studies showing acute increased urine output after caffeine doses in caffeine naïve individuals.<sup>117–123</sup> However, research shows that a tolerance to caffeine develops.<sup>124–129</sup> As such, those who are not caffeine naïve do not experience increased urine output or altered indicators of hydration status after consuming caffeinated beverages.<sup>57,101,124</sup>

In addition to unsubstantiated warnings about caffeine, unsubstantiated claims about the essentiality of plain water in meeting fluid requirements are also touted. Public perception holds that plain drinking water is more “hydrating” than other beverages even though it has long been put forth in medical, military, nutrition, and physiology texts that water from foods and beverages can meet fluid needs.<sup>9,10,19,21–23</sup> Limited research has been published regarding the efficacy of various beverages specifically on hydration.<sup>57,130</sup> Aside from hydration issues, potential benefits<sup>131–135</sup> and/or risks<sup>136,137</sup> of consuming plain water must also be considered.

### Emerging Data/Issues of Fluid and Disease

Research on the relationship of drinking water and the incidence of cancer has been an area of study for some time. For the most part, such studies have been concerned with contaminants in drinking water as a cause of cancer.<sup>135–138</sup> More recently, studies have examined the relationship between beverage volume, and in some studies, the specific types of fluids consumed as related to the incidence of various diseases.

Studies examining the fluid-disease relationship have considered various combinations of variables including dehydration, hyperhydration, fluid volume consumed, and types of beverages, as they relate to the absences, presence, or treatment of certain diseases or conditions. For example, dehydration has been linked to increases in risk for urinary tract infections, dental disease, broncho-pulmonary disorders, constipation, kidney stones, and impaired cognitive function.<sup>139–144</sup> A rela-

tionship between a high fluid intake and decreased risk of a variety of maladies including urinary tract stones, colon and urinary tract cancer, and mitral valve prolapse has been shown.<sup>132,135,139,145–154</sup> Some studies examining the relationship between fluid intake and specific diseases have found no correlation with the types of beverages consumed,<sup>135,138,145,151,152</sup> while others have.<sup>131,133,154–156</sup> For example, one study<sup>131</sup> found an inverse correlation between water intake and risk of fatal coronary heart disease and a positive correlation between intake of other fluids other than water and risk. As the authors noted, however, potential confounding variables need to be considered. Perhaps the water drinkers were more health conscious. Subjects in the study had an intake of milk higher than the U.S. population, and the type of milk consumed was not reported. Perhaps water drinkers consumed less fat. As with all epidemiologic research, known and unknown confounding variables make it impossible to draw cause-effect conclusions.

Whereas the available information on a fluid-disease relationship is far from conclusive, current data indicates need for further study. Determining the amount of fluid necessary to maintain hydration is one concern when trying to discern recommendations on fluid intake; determining fluid intake necessary to treat or decrease risk of certain diseases or disorders is another.

The value of further exploring the fluid-disease relationship is prudent and supported by the studies published to date. Additionally, the committee responsible for drafting DRIs for electrolytes and water are charged with considering levels of intake that may decrease risk of developmental abnormalities and chronic disease. The following is part of the justification given for replacing the RDAs with the DRIs.<sup>157</sup>

“Scientific knowledge regarding the roles of nutrients has expanded dramatically since the inception of the RDAs. Contemporary studies address topics ranging from the prevention of classical nutritional deficiency diseases, such as rickets, to the reduction of risk of chronic diseases such as osteoporosis, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. This expansion has extended the basis for the development of Dietary Reference Intakes.”

### Future Challenges

This review has touched on several issues pertinent to practical application of and future research on the hydration status of normal healthy adults. Although they are outside the scope of this paper, many other hydration issues are deserving of attention in the future. This paper focused on healthy normal adults, but healthy pediatric and geriatric populations are deserving of attention as well. The effect on hydration status of specific foods and fluids, such as alcoholic beverages, is an area worthy of review.

For six decades, the driving force behind fluid and electrolyte research has been medical care, survival, and optimal performance during times of physiologic stress. Thus, empirical and clinical research have been conducted on military personnel, athletes, and hospitalized patients. Missing, however, is hydration research more pertinent to “average” individuals who comprise the majority of the population.

In the 21st century, research is surfacing that moves beyond water requirements per se, and examines the relationship between optimal fluid intake and disease prevention. With the transition to DRIs,<sup>158</sup> consideration of the roles of essential nutrients has been expanded beyond preventing nutrient deficiency diseases and moving toward contributing to longer and healthier lives. The public’s interest in the relationship between nutrition and health combined with the handful of studies examining fluid and disease relationships brings a new focus to optimal fluid intake.

The challenge, current and future, is to continue research on topics such as fluid recommendations for various ages, hydrating properties of foods and specific fluids, and the relationships between disease and type and volume of fluids consumed. Research in these areas, combined with effective and science-based communication, will begin to fill the gap between hydration myth and reality.

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