



# ~ WATER ~

## THE MIRACLE DRUG

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Remember how you felt while leisurely soaking in a warm tub, enjoying a refreshing swim or appreciating a beautiful view of the ocean. Water not only improves our quality of life but is essential to life as well...especially the water we drink. Yet water is so cheap, so plentiful and so easy to get, we take it for granted. We tend to forget there are special things about water that no other beverage can match.

Water is the least expensive “medicine” you’ll ever find. Not only that, the side effects are beneficial rather than detrimental. As my grandmother used to say, “Water is good for what ails you.”

**Why do we need water?** Water dissolves the vitamins and minerals we need. The blood, which is mostly water, then carries them throughout the body. When we eat a meal, our digestive system changes the food into fuel for the body, which produces toxins and wastes. The kidneys use water to flush these wastes out of the body in your breath, in urine and in fecal matter. Think of it, if not for water, the wastes would become poisonous and we would die as a result of the food we eat and the air we breathe!

Parkinson’s may slow some things, but age slows our thirst mechanism. Therefore, the older we get, the less we can depend upon feeling thirsty to warn us to drink enough water. In 37% of Americans, the thirst mechanism is so weak that it is often mistaken for hunger. Then, by the time we feel thirsty, we’re already dehydrated.

If you become dehydrated from lack of water, your body gives top priority to organs like the brain and the kidneys. The brain needs water to keep its delicate balance or you could become confused, dizzy and experience behavioral changes--all of which could exacerbate Parkinson symptoms.

Some medications, such as Parkinson’s drugs (particularly Eldepryl), antihistamines, beta-blockers, calcium channel blockers, anticholinergics, anti-depressants and those used for urinary incontinence have side effects that can cause you to become dehydrated.

As Parkinson’s disease progresses, dehydration becomes a common problem. Parkinsonians may drink less water as it becomes more difficult to move, afraid that if they have a full bladder, they may be unable to get up and get to the bathroom and unfasten clothing in time. (**HAPS HINT:** if you drink water when you take your medications, you’ll be able to move by the time your bladder fills.)

Quenching your thirst with alcohol, coffee, teas or other caffeine-containing drinks can be slightly dehydrating. If you drink these drinks, also drink an equal amount of water. Sweet drinks, such as lemonade and soft drinks, will cause water to concentrate in your stomach and intestines instead of being absorbed into the rest of the body where it's needed.

### ***How can drinking water help your health?***



The colon's job is to add water to the stool to keep it soft. Since a hard stool is not normally life threatening, the colon has a low priority on water. When there's not enough to go around, some water is removed from the colon and given to other organs. The stool becomes dry and hard and difficult to pass, resulting in constipation. Therefore, water is particularly important for people with Parkinson's because, due to the disease process, the slowness of movement affecting the muscles that control the bowels slows the passage of stool through the large intestine. Constipation that lasts more than a few days can lead to fecal impaction (a large mass of hard feces that cannot be passed from the bowel) which could cause hospitalization.



Urinary tract infections are a frequent cause of hospitalization among people with Parkinson's. Drinking more water will prevent repeated infections that can be debilitating and even fatal.



Drinking 5 glasses of water a day decreases the risk of colon cancer by 45%, slashes the risk of breast cancer by 79% and reduces the risk of bladder cancer by 50%.



Because the lack of water is the #1 trigger of daytime fatigue, you may enjoy more energy.



Water lubricates our joints and acts as a shock absorber inside the eyes and spinal cord. Preliminary research indicates that 8-10 glasses of water a day could significantly ease back and joint pain for up to 80% of sufferers.



Drink water and you may even find yourself losing weight. When you drink water you feel full and will be less inclined to overeat. Even mild dehydration can slow your metabolism down by as much as 3%.



Water helps prevent dry, itchy skin in cold weather.

Need any more incentives for drinking water instead of popping a pill? Unless your doctor has specifically advised you to restrict your fluid intake, your best bet is to drink plenty of plain water, milk and juice. To determine how much water you need, divide your weight by half and drink that many ounces of water, up to 12 glasses. For instance, if you weigh 150 lbs. you should drink 75 ounces of water a day. Experts often recommend at least two quarts (8 large glasses) of water daily. If you're not used to drinking water, start gradually by adding a glass or two a day, and work up. (**HAPS HINT:** get a one-quart sports bottle with a straw to help make the counting easier). Your system may take some time to adjust. You may even retain water at first, but gradually your body will release the extra fluids and stay at a well-hydrated level.

Whether you view your glass as half full or half empty, for the sake of your health, make sure it contains water!