

Leading Experts Sign Scientific Consensus Statement on the Importance of Hydration in Health

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November, 2007 – Governments, organizations and institutions responsible for establishing and implementing dietary guidelines should include scientifically based recommendations about the importance of hydration and total water intake to promote health and well-being. That’s the conclusion of a group of leading hydration-science experts, convened by the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI), Washington, D.C., whose signatures appear at the end of the Scientific Consensus Statement on Hydration and Health recently published in “Hydration and Health,” a supplement to the October 2007 issue of the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*.

The experts agreed that science links adequate hydration to survival, health promotion, sustained physical and mental performance, and workplace safety and productivity. The consensus statement includes six specific summary statements:

1. Water is essential for life.
2. Relying on the perception of thirst does not always guarantee appropriate total water intake.
3. Foods and beverages contribute varying amounts of water in the diet.
4. Consuming a variety of non-caffeinated and caffeinated beverages, including water, milk, tea, coffee, juice, soft drinks and sports drinks, can contribute to meeting the body’s water requirement.
5. Foods, including certain fruits, vegetables, soups and dairy products, can also contribute to meet the body’s water requirement.
6. Appropriate beverage and food choices for an individual may vary on the basis of energy, nutrient and water needs, as well as consumer preference.

“Water is essential for life and health yet hydration and fluid intake has not received adequate attention in public dietary guidelines,” said Maxime Buyckx, MD, director, health and nutrition sciences for the Beverage Institute For Health & Wellness of The Coca-Cola Company. Buyckx also chairs the ILSI North America Technical Committee on Hydration that organized the 2006 Symposium on Hydration and Health, during which the Consensus Statement was signed. “Our understanding of hydration and health is rapidly expanding, and that, coupled with increased emphasis on physical activity in public dietary guidance, points to the need to stress the importance of fluid intake in future recommendations.”

Hydration needs vary depending on age, body size, physical activity level, health status, food intake patterns and environmental conditions, such as humidity and temperature. Thus, the consensus statement indicates recommendations for total water intake, including beverages and foods, should take into consideration regional and international differences, in addition to lifecycle and special health needs. For example, in the United States and Canada, the Institute of Medicine base recommendations on data showing that about 80% of total water intake comes from drinking water and other beverages, with the remaining 20% coming from foods. For people 19 years and older, that translates to average daily fluid intake (both drinking water and other beverages) of 3 liters (about 13 cups) for males and 2.2 liters (about 9 cups) for females.

“Substantial research has been conducted since the Institute of Medicine published hydration and fluid intake recommendations in 2004,” says Buyckx. “And the conference provided a platform for experts to build consensus reflecting the more recent research, and also consider areas where more research is needed.”

The ILSI Symposium on Hydration and Health featured experts from both the United States and Europe and attracted attendees from government, academia, industry and professional organizations. Signed by 14 researchers, the consensus statement reflects the science that was discussed and

synthesized at the ILSI North American Conference on Hydration and Health Promotion, held November 29-30, 2006, in Washington, D.C.