



Stay Healthy

Ask the Nurse

Q: When my doctor takes my blood pressure, what do the numbers mean?

A: Blood pressure is measured by the systolic number (the top) and the diastolic number (the bottom). The systolic number shows the pressure of blood against the artery walls when your heart has finished contracting. The diastolic number shows the pressure of blood against the artery walls between heartbeats. A reading of 140/90 indicates high blood pressure or hypertension and requires medical attention. If your systolic number is 120-139 and your diastolic number is 80-89, you have pre-hypertension, which can be controlled by diet.

Drinking enough water?

Remember how drinking lots of cold water in the summer kept you refreshed? Now that the cool days of autumn are just around the corner, you still need to drink as much. Water is the main ingredient in all the fluids that travel through the systems in your body, keeping you nourished and removing waste. Here's what can happen if you don't drink enough water:

- **Dry cough and bronchitis.** Your body has to moisturize the air through the mucous membranes in your nose and bronchii before it reaches your lungs. Without enough water, your mucous membranes become dry, irritating your lungs and causing a dry cough and also making you less resistant to viruses and bacteria.
- **Constipation.** Water is necessary to move food through your intestines and to help remove body waste easily. Without enough water, your bowel movement is hard and dry. Constipation can lead to hemorrhoids and even colon polyps.

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- **Dry, itchy skin.** Urination helps remove toxins from your body. Not drinking enough water to produce urine makes you eliminate these toxins through your skin. This can cause skin outbreaks and can aggravate eczema.

Make sure to get enough water to equal at least six glasses a day. That includes other liquids like juice and soup, and also grapes, oranges, cantaloupe, lettuce, cucumbers, and celery, all of which have lots of water. Cut back on coffee and tea, which are diuretics and make you urinate more, causing you to lose the water you need.

If you have a home health care need, CALL: 1-888-VNS-1-CALL (1-888-867-1225) or VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.VNSNY.org

Note: This newsletter is for educational purposes only; it should not be substituted for advice by your doctor. If you have an immediate medical concern, you should consult your doctor.