

Eating and Drinking in Hot Weather – How to Stay Healthy on Hot Summer Days

High temperatures put more strain on our bodies than many people realize. When we sweat, we lose not only water but also essential minerals. If these losses are not adequately replaced, symptoms such as fatigue, headaches, poor concentration, dizziness, or circulatory problems may occur. With the right nutrition and adequate fluid intake, you can support your body and cope better with hot summer days.

Why Hot Weather Affects the Body

To maintain a constant body temperature of around 37°C (98.6°F), our bodies produce more sweat when outdoor temperatures rise. At the same time, blood vessels dilate, which can cause blood pressure to drop. Losing as little as two percent of your body weight through dehydration can significantly impair both physical and mental performance. Older adults, children, pregnant women, and people with cardiovascular conditions are particularly vulnerable. Typical signs of dehydration include thirst, dizziness, headaches, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and dark-colored urine.

Staying Hydrated – How Much Fluid Do You Need?

As a general guideline, adults should aim for a daily fluid intake of approximately 30 ml per kilogram of body weight. During hot weather or physical activity, fluid requirements may increase to more than three liters per day. Suitable beverages include: water or mineral water, unsweetened herbal and fruit teas, tap water flavored with lemon, cucumber, or fresh mint, highly diluted fruit juice (one part juice to three parts water). Try to avoid sugary soft drinks, energy drinks, and excessive alcohol consumption. Alcohol increases fluid loss and places additional strain on the cardiovascular system.

Tip: Ice-cold drinks do not cool the body more effectively and may even cause stomach discomfort. Many people tolerate lukewarm or lightly chilled drinks better, and they are just as effective in replacing lost fluids. It is best to drink regularly throughout the day.

Light Meals Ease the Strain on Your Body

Heavy, fatty meals place additional stress on digestion and can increase the feeling of heat. Instead, opt for several smaller meals rich in vegetables, high-quality protein, and healthy fats. Adequate protein intake remains important during the summer, as it helps preserve muscle mass, promotes satiety, and supports numerous metabolic processes. Excellent protein sources include fish, legumes, dairy products, eggs, tofu, and lean poultry.

Particularly recommended are: salads with legumes, chicken, or fish, steamed vegetables with feta cheese, cold vegetable soups such as gazpacho, yogurt or skyr with fresh fruit, wholegrain bread with cottage cheese, vegetable omelets.

Water-Rich Foods Provide Additional Hydration

Approximately one quarter of our daily fluid intake comes from food. Foods with a particularly high water content include: watermelon, strawberries, peaches and nectarines, cucumbers, tomatoes, zucchini and leafy salads.

These foods not only provide water but also valuable vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that help protect the body's cells from oxidative stress.

Replenishing Minerals

Sweating leads to the loss of sodium as well as smaller amounts of potassium and magnesium. A balanced diet is usually sufficient to replace these minerals.

Good sources include potatoes, legumes, nuts, seeds, dairy products, and green vegetables. After prolonged physical activity or excessive sweating, a light vegetable broth can also help replenish sodium levels.

Exercising in Hot Weather

Regular physical activity remains important during the summer months. However, more intensive exercise should be scheduled for the early morning or evening whenever possible. Avoid exercising during the hottest part of the day.

Remember to drink enough fluids before, during, and after exercise, and adjust the intensity of your workout according to the temperature.

Conclusion: Stay Healthy Throughout the Summer

The right nutrition during hot weather helps reduce the strain on your body and prevents heat-related discomfort. Drinking enough fluids, choosing light meals, eating water-rich fruits and vegetables, and including high-quality protein sources will help keep your body well nourished on hot days.

Older adults, athletes, and people with physically demanding occupations particularly benefit from an individually tailored nutrition strategy.

Would you like to learn how to adapt your diet to hot summer weather or to your personal needs? I would be happy to support you with evidence-based nutritional counseling and develop a personalized nutrition plan tailored to your lifestyle.

To schedule an appointment, please call +43 1 9346206 or email kocijan@optimalessen.com.