

**Family Living  
Focus**

by  
Franklin Co.  
Extension Agent  
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**WATER FOR FUN,  
SURVIVAL AND HEALTH**

Water is high on the list of necessities we cannot live without. We need water for life. It is necessary for plants, animals, and humans to live and grow. But we use water for fun, for cleanliness, and health.

**Water for fun:** Safety is the most important consideration when water is used for recreation as well as daily use. When children are around water, remember children aren't waterproof.

A few fundamentals of water safety include: No going into the water alone, especially young children. No matter how shallow the water even if it is in a bathtub, a backyard pool, or open water, adults need to supervise.

Adult supervision is important for young children at the beach or in the backyard. It is very easy to roughhouse in water and this can quickly turn into more than just

play. You may have to create a calming time out, like a lemonade break.

No matter how accustomed one is to a backyard pool, or how capable your child is around the water, don't let your safety guard down. Have rules and stick to them. You may have to review these rules on a regular basis.

Teach your child to swim. This may be with a learn-to-swim course at the YMCA or at your local community pool. Teach them to always swim with a buddy and not to dive into shallow water. Don't dive without adults to supervise.

Have children wear lifejackets. All non-swimmers and children under age five should wear a Coast Guard-approved-type vest when around any body of water.

**Water for Life:** No chart will tell how much you need, but we do know that one cannot survive without it. Water is the calorieless compound of hydrogen and oxygen

that every cell in our bodies needs to survive. Over all, water makes up about half to two-thirds of the body composition. As adults, we each have 40 to 50 quarts in our bodies. Men's bodies contain more water than women's because they have less fat than women and lean tissue holds more water than fat tissue.

Thirst is generally a good indicator of when you should take in more water. This is regulated by the sodium in your blood. The average adult consumes and gets rid of two and a half to three quarts of water a day.

Often a person will drink enough water to feel that his thirst is satisfied but it may not be enough to replace what is needed by his body.

Did you know that water suppresses the appetite naturally and helps the body use body fat? Studies have shown that a decrease in water intake may cause the fat deposits to increase. It was found that an increase in water intake can actually help reduce the fat deposits.

The reason that is given is that the kidneys can't work properly without enough water. When the kidneys can't do their work like they should, some of this work is given to the liver to do. One main function of the liver is to break down fat for energy use. But if it has to do part of the kidney's job, the liver cannot use as much fat for energy so it has to be stored in the body as fat.

**Water and weight loss:** The body will not work properly without enough water. It won't be able to use the fat like it should.

Retained water will show up as excess weight. To get rid of excess water, you need to take in more water to help flush out the waste products. (Salt intake may need to be checked as to the amount you take in.) Drinking water is an important tool to help with weight loss.

Water helps make up the liquid cushion that surrounds the body tissues and intestines.

Remember the body uses water for a variety of functions. It aids digestion, absorption, and circulation, transports nutrients, builds tissues, carries away waste and helps maintain body temperature at 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Almost all of the body's living cells need and depend on water to function.

**Dehydration:** Unfortunately, thirst is not always the first sign of dehydration. It is possible to lose up to two quarts of water before we become noticeably thirsty. Often

when we feel thirsty and drink fluids, our body fluids are not fully replaced. Most people stop feeling thirsty when they have drunk only about two-thirds of the liquid they have lost. This is of special importance to the elderly whose thirst mechanism may not be as acute as it once was.

All liquids are not created equal in their ability to satisfy our fluid needs. Some beverages such as coffee, tea and alcohol actually increase water output because of their diuretic effect.

**Food:** All food contains some water. Milk, for an example, is about 87 percent water, vegetables 70 to 90 percent, and meat between 40 to 70 percent.

**Cleanliness:** Cleaning hands with soap and water helps control germs. Use of soap and water helps keep our living surfaces clean and contributes to good health.

The importance of water in our daily lives cannot be stressed enough. A good rule of thumb for adults is to drink six to eight cups of water daily.

**What We Eat In America**

**JUDY MCBRIDE  
Everybody's Science**

Rockville, Md.—Some 6,000 Americans—from young children to the elderly—are being interviewed at homes across the country as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's continuing survey, "What We Eat In America."

Throughout 1995, interviewers are calling on 11,500 households in 62 geographical areas to find those 6,000 individuals who represent the U.S. populations, said nutritionist Alanna Moshfegh, who heads the survey.

Moshfegh said USDA is required by law to monitor the dietary habits of Americans on a continuing basis. This is the second year of the 1994-1996 survey. By the end of 1996, information will have been collected on the eating habits of about 15,000 Americans, she said.

Among its many uses, the survey will compile data to help policy makers:

- predict the demand for agricultural products and help to ensure the availability of foods Americans want to eat;
- monitor changes in food consumption and assess the adequacy of American diets;
- and determine how well

Americans are using and understanding nutrition labels.

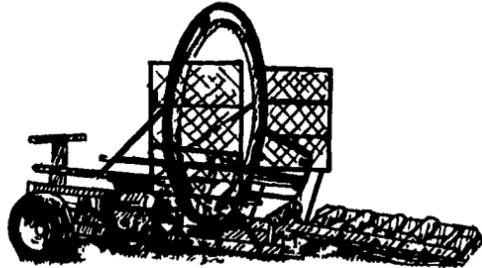
Moshfegh said the interviews, each taking about 30 minutes, will ask people about the foods they ate on two different days. A few weeks later, a selected number of these respondents over age 20 will be called to ascertain their knowledge of diet and health.

"We need everyone's cooperation to ensure that we get an accurate picture of what foods Americans are eating and how much, as well as what they know about the relationship of diet to health," she said.

One finding of the last three-year survey, from 1989 through 1991, was that Americans were consuming an average 34 percent of their total calories as fat. That was down from 36 percent in 1987-'88 and 40 percent in 1977-'78—but still shy of the recommended 30 percent fat.

A Rockville, Md., research firm is conducting the survey for USDA. All interviewers carry photo ID badges. No government agencies, including the USDA, will have access to information that identifies respondents. Information will be published only in statistical summaries and tables (Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture).

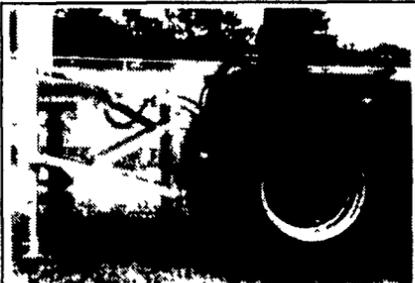
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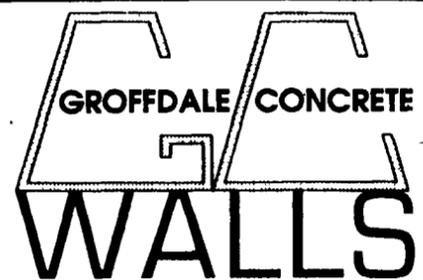
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