



10 TIPS for SUMMER HEALTH

by Elson Haas MD

Hydration

– Drink water. It sounds simple yet is often overlooked. Hydration is key to a healthy body, especially in Summer. Most people need at least two to three quarts of liquid per day, especially in hot weather or with sweating and exercise. If you drink more than this, add some electrolyte solution, such as Emergen-C packets or Power Paks, to your water—or ionic trace minerals, available in your natural food stores. Almost all commercially prepared drinks are high in sugar and are not a substitute for the healing benefits of water. Sun and salt are dehydrating, so balance your need between salt and water. Avoid drinking water that has been in sun-heated plastic containers so as to not consume plastic chemicals. See Chapter 1 on Water in *Staying Healthy with Nutrition* for more information.

Minimize Sun Exposure

– Excessive sun exposure can be dangerous to your health, with dehydration and even skin cancer. For dry skin, carry and use nourishing, natural body lotion or oils (great after your bath). While enjoying the sun and outdoors, protect yourself from overexposure to sunlight by wearing a hat and using natural sunscreens without excessive chemicals. Carry some Aloe Vera gel for overexposure; its cooling and healing effects will soothe any sunburn. For clothing, cotton is best since it breathes, and air moves through it to keep you cool. The synthetics are easy to wash but the chemicals and lack of ventilation are possible problems. Have layers of clothes to wear to protect you from ticks, poison plants, scratches, and from overexposure. Also, use good sunglasses since excessive sunlight can cause headaches and dehydration.

Exercise

– Be aware of your activity level. If you are not already doing regular work-outs, go easy and don't injure yourself by overdoing it at first. Ease into exercise. Experiment with your exercise routine. Monitor your progress to see what's most effective and most enjoyable. Vary your program to lower body stress and injury risk from the same repetitive activity. Get plenty of refreshing activities like hiking, biking, and swimming in these hotter months. Even short bursts of healing aerobic activity can de-stress and release toxins through sweating. Attention to deep breathing is a most necessary component to health. Pay attention regularly to your breath and your state of stress, and do some relaxation breathing as well. When feeling stressed, take a deep breath in and as you breathe out, let your whole body relax and sense your energy drop into your core, your center below your navel. In martial arts and qi-gong, this dantian center is the place from which we move.

Summer Foods

– **Enjoy Nature's bounty** wherever you live by eating fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables at their organic best. Most cities have local farmer's markets, so shopping there is second only to you growing your own garden. When you find a good resource, buy some simple and nourishing snacks that will eliminate the need to buy quick, processed foods. Good snack choices include apples and other fruits, almonds and sunflower seeds, and some food-based, nourishing protein bars without added sugars. Also, be sure to wash all produce before you eat it. Avoid excessively salty foods and alcohol, and if you use certain substances regularly, as with caffeine, alcohol or sugar, take a break for a week or three this summer. Bear in mind that too much sugar may also weaken your immunity and put you at greater risk of infection, as well as adversely affect insulin metabolism and cause weight gain.

Heart, Circulation and Small Intestine Health

– In Traditional Chinese Medicine Summer is the season for these body organs and functions, so let's nurture them with greens and veggies for nutrition plus ginger, curcumin and garlic for energy and warmth. Here's a favorite recipe for efficient tone in the Small Intestine, and for good Digestion, and Assimilation from the Summer chapter of my book *Staying Healthy with the Seasons*.

- Mix together equal parts brown rice, lentils and sunflower seeds.
- Add 1.5 times the amount of water
- Simmer slowly for about 45 minutes or until done.
- Eat 1-2 cups daily for 2 weeks.

Digestive Support and Protection from Illness

– If you do eat the wrong foods, either out of choice or from lack of proper nutritional preparation, take steps to get back on the right track. Carry simple remedies with you (especially for travel), such as antacids or baking soda, acidophilus culture for upset stomachs, zinc lozenges for sore throats, as well as echinacea with goldenseal to protect yourself from bacteria and

other germs moving in on you. Another nutritional aid is flaxseed oil liquid or capsules; keep in a cool, dark place if not refrigerated. If you become excessively dry, take a few caps or a tablespoon twice daily, as this will give your body the right lubrication. I always carry a GI tract dis-infecter and rebalancer for travel or GI upset anywhere. One I like is called *Gastromycin* made by Nutricology, containing aloe, bismuth, grapefruit seed, and licorice. For gas or indigestion, try fennel or anise seed—simmer one teaspoon per cup for 10 minutes, then steep for 15 minutes, and then drink a cup.

Picnics & BBQ's

– Picnic and barbeque foods should be safe and healthy. Use a cooler or ice to keep items cold. Watch out for eggs and mayo and other foods that could become contaminated without refrigeration. Some picnic food ideas include bean salad, tabouli, or fruit salad. What are your favorites? Take some protein foods as well, such as nuts and seeds, yogurt, cheese, or tofu salads. Also, have some simple, fresh choices, such as grapes, watermelon, apples and other fresh fruits. Pack your foods separately in Ziploc bags or closed containers, and then place in your cooler. Sandwiches and other finger foods like cut-up vegetables and dips are easy. Make your sandwiches fresh once you arrive and keep the spreads and fixings on ice. Even if you're just carrying healthy snacks in a purse or backpack, you can include a cold pack to safeguard your food. By not mixing ingredients in advance, you'll keep the spoilage to a minimum.

Inner Healing and De-stressing Adventures

– Prepare for this Summer's enjoyment of the outdoors. Plan a fun trip of hiking, camping, playing at the river, or a few days resting at the ocean. Rekindling your Earth connection has benefits that last beyond this season, continuing to enrich your life. Relax and breathe. Enjoy yourself. Lighten up! Practice letting go of your stresses, leaving them at home or the office. Build some time into every day for rest and replenishment. This might entail letting yourself just sit for a while watching the clouds, the surf, listening to music, or reading a good book. Try being a wave or becoming the sky. I love an affirmation used for relaxation when I lie down, especially in an open meadow, "My mind is the sky, and the clouds are my thoughts; I just watch them floating by."

Nutritional Supplements

– All the antioxidant nutrients are helpful for balancing the stresses of daily life. Vitamins C and E, beta-carotene, zinc and selenium are the main antioxidant nutrients. Others are vitamin D, alpha-lipoic acid, pycnogenol, and L-cysteine. I use B-vitamins as tablets or sublingual drops as well for balancing stress. Also, it may be helpful to have some spirulina or blue-green algae tablets for energy support. These nutritional products can help replace caffeine and sugar as energy support. During the warmer months, store your supplements out of the sun or in the cooler if you carry them around as I do. Herbs like Siberian ginseng may also help you deal with stress and fatigue as a natural energy and adrenal support. The Emergen-C or Power Pak packets

with extra C, B-vitamins and minerals are also very helpful for stress and exercise replenishment. Put a pack in your water. I use this regularly around exercise workouts and for travel.

A Few Tips for Healthy Summer Travel and Time in Nature

- Leave no trace of trash, and carry a recyclable garbage bag.
- For foods, compact/nutritious choices like nuts and seeds or 'trail mixes' are good for hiking. However, watch out for trail mixes that are too high in sugars, such as with chocolate pieces and excess dried fruits. You can fortify your trail mixes by adding extra of your favorite nuts and seeds.
- Bug proof your vacation. Be prepared. Check out the new, non-chemical bug repellants before you begin your nature journeys and make sure you can tolerate the aroma and that it prevents the types of bites and stings you might encounter. Be aware of other creatures such as ticks, bees, or snakes—they live here too! Take info on who to call or where to go if anything does happen. If you do get stung, the ice in the cooler is one of your best instant healers; you can carry some fresh aloe leaves in the cooler and soothe your sun exposure. For all activities, practice safety. Make sure you have life jackets for water play, and that they are up to safety standards. Children and seniors should be watched by a qualified swimmer, who has had some training.
- Use common sense for any hazards you encounter, and above all, make it fun and relaxing.
- Keep a journal for your good memories or to record your dreams.
- Prepare your home before you go away so that when you arrive back, things are organized, and you can relax from the adventure of your journey.
- Keep your eyes open for unusual plants, and what about those birds? Are there orioles, finches, or woodpeckers? Take some light-weight binoculars so you can track what you are seeing, or if you'll be away from cities, take a portable telescope to better see the night sky and become part of the cosmos to which we are all connected. Connecting with Nature can be awesome and replenishing.

Enjoy Your Summer and Have some FUN!

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