and then travel to the hospital for a colonoscopy. Two disadvantages of using colon hydrotherapy, according to Dr. Jeffrey Medoff of Greensboro, are that it cannot be done at home (unlike taking the oral laxative) and that health insurance does not cover it at this time.


Distilled Water: Could it Lead to Deficiencies?

A widely disseminated article on the internet by Zoltan P. Rona, MD, Msc, asserts that “drinking distilled water on a regular, daily basis is potentially dangerous.” In Rona’s experience, people who only use distilled water for cooking and drinking “develop multiple mineral deficiencies.” He says that adding trace minerals to distilled water alleviates the problem somewhat but not completely. Worries about toxic chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and pathogens in drinking water have pushed many consumers to use distillers or reverse-osmosis filters to purify their water. (Reverse osmosis also produces low-mineral water.) Are consumers trading one problem for another?

Because Rona’s article does not contain specific studies in its references, I did a web search and found a 2005 World Health Organization (WHO) report called Nutrients in Drinking Water. This report discusses health effects associated with drinking distilled water from desalination plants. This water is not totally devoid of minerals. Desalination plants always add some minerals back into the distilled water to slow corrosion in pipes. Nonetheless, laboratory studies have shown that low-mineral water causes negative effects in animals and humans. Rats who consumed low-mineral water for one year showed “reduced secretions of tri-iodothyronine and aldosterone, and increased secretion of cortisol,” according to a Russian study in the WHO report. The rats’ extracellular body water increased, as did their sodium blood level, urine output, and loss of sodium and chloride ions via urination. Human subjects experienced similar increases in extracellular body water, urine output, and sodium blood levels. In addition, studies have found that people drinking low-mineral water eliminate more sodium, potassium, chloride, magnesium, and calcium ions.

Proponents of distillation have various suggestions for remineralizing water: a grain of rice placed in a jar of distilled water, sea salt, various trace mineral products, and additives such as Willard’s Water and Hallelujah Acres’ WaterMax. Willard’s Water, developed by John Willard in the 1960s, enhances nutrient absorption, according to independent tests. I am not aware of in vivo tests involving these other remineralizing suggestions. Good-quality drinking water involves more than mineral content. One of the more interesting discussions of optimal drinking water comes from Michael Donaldson, PhD, director of research at Hallelujah Acres. In assessing drinking water, he looks for ionic mineral content, an alkaline pH (over 7), and low surface tension. The lower the surface tension, the more easily the water and accompanying nutrients are absorbed and assimilated by the body.

Finding unbiased, clear-cut information about the health effects of drinking water processed with various filters and treatments is very difficult. Most of the information is tied to a product. An astounding variety of water filters, treatments, and supplements is available in the marketplace. Since water quality and quantity are a keystone of naturopathic medicine, I wonder if practitioners have empirical evidence that can help us sort through the options.


The Many Benefits of Ginger

“To call ginger a digestive herb is an understatement,” Paul Schulick says in his well-written book Ginger: Common Spice & Wonder Drug. Ginger (Zingiber officinale) contains potent digestive enzymes, most notably the proteolytic enzyme zingibain. This spice actually balances the digestive system. It eases diarrhea, constipation, and nausea. Ginger kills parasites and inhibits gut pathogens while it encourages beneficial flora. It also protects against ulcers, reducing total gastric juice volume as H2-receptor antagonists (e.g., Zantac, Pepcid, Tagamet) do, but without disturbing pepsin-pH interaction.

In addition to its digestive benefits, ginger has powerful anti-inflammatory effects. The proteolytic enzymes, along with antioxidants and eicosanoid-modulating compounds, have relieved pain and inflammation in rheumatoid arthritis patients. Dr. K. C. Srivastava, a Danish researcher, and others have completed clinical studies, lasting three to six months, that show “ginger is more effective than [nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for arthritis relief] and without serious side effects.”

Schulick says that its ability to balance the eicosanoid cascade is “the most remarkable and probably important principle action of ginger.” Eicosanoids, which include prostaglandins, thromboxanes, and leukotrienes, are compounds produced from dietary fat, primarily arachidonic acid. Eicosanoid compounds have hormonal-like regulatory properties and affect every organ system. Some eicosanoids promote inflammation, and have also been associated with arthritis; cancer; asthma; insulin resistance; and cardiovascular, pulmonary, and renal diseases. Ginger inhibits at least two enzymes needed to convert dietary fat into eicosanoids: 5-lipooxygenase and cyclooxygenase. A 1982 Japanese study found that ginger
that ginger actually balances eicosanoid ratios. "As tempting it is to classify one eicosanoid as positive and another as negative," Schulick writes, "the reality is that the ratio or proportion with the others is probably most critical."

Traditional Chinese Medicine treats each form of ginger – fresh, dried, steamed, roasted – as a separate drug. Processing accentuates different properties. An alcohol extract, for example, has more effect on pepsin production than a water extract. A honey-ginger syrup increases the spice's anti-ulcer effect. Srivastava reported on a 50-year-old man who eliminated the pain and inflammation of rheumatoid arthritis in three months by eating about 50 grams (about 7 tsp.) of lightly cooked fresh ginger each day with his meat and vegetables. "Things would be much easier if there were only one type of ginger product to recommend," Schulick writes. "Fortunately for the consumer, it can be argued that benefit can be gained from them all. One cannot go wrong with the following recommendation: Consume ginger in both the fresh and dry forms, if possible."

Ginger has no negative effects, but it may increase or lessen the effectiveness of pharmaceuticals and other therapies. Some people may also experience discomfort if they take large amounts right away. In such cases, Schulick recommends decreasing the dosage, and taking the spice with food and plenty of juice or water.


Magnetized Water has Notable Properties

For a simple molecule, water – good old H2O – has some puzzling qualities. One is its response to magnetic fields. In theory, water is diamagnetic; it should not react to magnetic exposure. But a number of experiments with magnetized water (that is, water subjected to a strong magnetic field) show that its characteristics shift. Japanese physicists found that water's melting point slightly increases when exposed to a magnetic field, according to a December 6, 2004, report at physicsworld.com. Scientists have also discovered that water in a strong magnetic field displays a different near-infrared spectrum as well as refractive index compared to nonmagnetized water. Magnetic exposure also causes water molecules to bond into smaller groups, lowering surface tension and increasing its bioavailability. Smaller water-molecule groups pass through cell walls more easily than larger groupings. Consequently, smaller water groups transport nutrients into cells and carry waste out more efficiently. Exposure to a magnetic field can also make water more alkaline.

These alterations in water have physiological effects. One Chinese study found that activity of the enzyme glutamate decarboxylase increased by 30% in magnetized water (MW). Other studies have found that oral irrigation with MW reduces calculus formation (but not plaque) on teeth. MW also reduces calculi (mineral formations) in the urinary tract. Chinese hospitals have used MW to treat urinary-tract stones for decades. Chinese scientists have also investigated MW as a means of reducing antineoplastic drugs’ toxic effects. Mice, divided into groups, received high doses of an antineoplastic drug. Mice that also got magnetized water injections (0.2 ml for seven days) lived longer and had higher white-cell counts than matching controls: "It is possible that MW can remarkably extend the life span of mice and attenuate the leukopenia by mitigating the toxicity of anticancer drugs in vivo."

I did find a few caveats about the use of magnetized water. Luc DeSchepper, MD, PhD, reports that homeopathic remedies made with magnetized water can cause intense aggravation of symptoms. Furthermore, users need to remember that MW’s increased bioavailability boosts the body’s response to any supplements and pharmaceutical drugs, possibly creating an unintentional overdose. Finally, longer exposure to magnetized water does not necessarily have the best effect. A Cuban study showed that pawpaw seeds soaked in magnetized water for 24 hours germinated two and three days sooner than seeds soaked in normal water and seeds that received no treatment. A higher percentage of seeds germinated, too. However, when the soaking time increased to 48 or 72 hours, germination time for the magnetized water group decreased to one day sooner than the normal water group and two days sooner than the control group. The final germination percentages also declined: 92.2 percent of seeds held for 24 hours in magnetized water germinated compared to 85.0 percent held for 48 hours and 82.6 percent for 72 hours.

For those interested in testing magnetized water for themselves for very little cost, Jon Barron suggests using epoxy to glue the north side of 10 magnets (800 gauss or more) to a jar. (See www.jonbarron.org/baseline-health-program/11-04-2002_2.php.) He says water in the jar will respond within ten minutes.


Lu Dayong Shen Wenda; Cao Jingyi Lu Tingren, Cui Baoyi, Fu Zhiyu. Effect of magnetized water on the mice given high doses of antineoplastic drugs
Copyright of Townsend Letter is the property of Townsend Letter Group and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.