The A B C's of Keeping Your Child Well-Hydrated

by Deanna DeLong

Children need water!! While most of us know the health benefits of drinking plenty of water each day, sometimes we forget the importance of water for the little people in our lives. In reality, children often need to take in water even more than adults do. To stay properly hydrated, children need to consume as much fluid as they lose, and kids tend to lose a larger percentage of their body fluid during the day than adults, simply because they are growing and so active!

Here are a the ABC's of keeping your little ones happy, healthy, and well-hydrated:

A Adequate hydration is important!

Your child is almost two-thirds water! Water is the most important nutrient you can give your child. It helps nearly every part of her body function. Water carries nutrients and oxygen to all the cells in your child's body. It helps regulate her body temperature, converts the food she eats into energy, and helps her body absorb nutrients. It removes wastes and cleanses her system, and protects and cushions her vital organs and joints.

Water makes up almost 90% of your child's brain and 75% of her muscles! One of the first signs of mild dehydration in your child is grouchiness. She also may not be able to concentrate. Even headaches are a frequent sign of dehydration.

Slight dehydration weakens the immune cells in the nose, eyes, and mouth—the entry point for viruses. She will be far more susceptible to colds and flu when she's not drinking sufficient water.

B Begin keeping your child hydrated at an early age.

Right from the start, kids need plenty of fluids every day. In fact, infants and children drink more than two and a half times the water adults drink—proportionate to their body weight. Experts recommend that parents carefully monitor the fluid intake of all children beyond nursing stage. Children should drink at least 2/3 of an ounce of water per pound of their body weight each day to stay well-hydrated.

Busy children forget to drink. Keep water handy for your child at all times and encourage him to drink water throughout the day. When a child is involved in physical activities and sports, encourage him to take a break every 15 to 20 minutes for a drink of water. Buy each child in the family his own special water bottle—and encourage him to keep it with him all the time. Make sure that your child has water available during school and study time. Strap a bottle to the backpack to make sure that water is always available at school.

Carefully monitor or eliminate your child's intake of juices and soda. A recent study found that children who drank more than 12 ounces of juice a day were shorter or more overweight than their classmates. The American Society of Pediatricians state that juice is the #1 cause of childhood obesity in the United States today. Regular consumption of juice can also lead to tooth decay. Children who are raised drinking juice and pop lose their taste for water.

It's common for parents to water down juice, with 6 ounces of water to one or two ounces of juice. While the theory behind this practice is good (limiting the amount of juice intake), in reality, the child learns that water must have flavor. Better to give your child just water and skip the juice altogether.

C Contaminants in drinking water can harm your child.

While children need water as much or more than adults, it is important to remember that they are also more vulnerable to contaminants found in tap water. Unfortunately, much of today's tap water is host to any number of toxic and cancer-causing chemicals, microbes, lead, mercury, and other substances.

According to an EPA audit published in USA Today (9/2/99), nearly 90% of all violations of the *Safe Drinking Water Act* are not reported in

the government database that alerts consumers and triggers legal action when water systems don't meet federal health standards.

Infants and children are especially vulnerable to lead. I first became aware of lead in drinking water when I had the water in my home tested 15 years ago. To my surprise, we had over twice the allowable level of lead. The government sets an *action level* of 15 parts per billion. In reality, no level of lead is safe. Our home had 32 parts per billion, which set me on a search for a quality filter.

Multi-Pure 750SB below sink system—NSF certified to reduce 67 contaminants.

Lead in drinking water can lead to a variety of serious problems for children—anemia, hyperactivity, irritability, learning disorders, muscle and joint pain, behavior problems, headaches, and even hearing loss.

Pesticides and chlorine related disinfection by-products may also pose serious risks to children, including cancer and other illnesses that may not become apparent for years. Chlorinated drinking water is also linked to an increase in miscarriages and birth defects.

Because infants and young children drink so much, these toxins are especially harmful to them. A baby who consumes only formula or breast milk takes in about one-seventh of its body weight in water each day, equal to about three gallons for an adult.

The majority of contaminants—including lead—also pass through breast milk.

You should consider purchasing a good water filter to make sure your water is protecting your child, rather than harming him. Consult NSF International (1-800-NSF-MARK or www.nsf.org) for a listing of drinking water filters which lists the contaminants they are certified to reduce. Look under *Standard 53—Health Effects*—for filters that reduce contaminants of health concern. A solid carbon block filter reduces the broadest range of contaminants. If you purchase a filter that is not NSF-certified, you have no guarantee that the manufacturer's claims are true.

People buy drinking water treatment systems for many reasons, and many buy a system simply to improve the taste of their water. However, to protect your family, you'll want a system that will reduce harmful contaminants like lead, Cryptosporidium, pesticides, herbicides, and volatile organic chemicals. With the NSF certification, you can be certain the system you select will do what it says it will do! The NSF certification is your guarantee that the manufacturer's claims are true.

NSF International is a non-profit testing lab which is recognized by the EPA* to test and certify certain consumer products, including water filters. When NSF certifies a filter, you can be assured that:

- The contaminant reduction claims are true.
- The system is not adding anything harmful to the water.
- The system is structurally sound.
- Advertising, literture, and labeling are not misleading.
- The materials and manufacturing process don't change.

NSF comes unnanounced twice each year to the manufacturing facility to make sure that all systems are in compliance.

With the water getting worse all over the country, the filtration industry is booming. Unfortunately, many systems only reduce chlorine and not contaminants.

As of February 12, 2008, of the 5,365 filters that were NSF-certified, only 20 systems were certified to reduce all *combinations of contaminants* (cysts, lead, mercury, asbestos, MTBE, VOCs, PCBs, chloramine, and arsenic V). All 20 systems are made by Multi-Pure Corporation (www.multipure.com).

It's as easy saying the ABC's! Children need lots of contaminant-free water every day. Help your child stay healthy, active, and learning by keeping him/her well-hydrated.

If you would like more information on Multi-Pure drinking water systems, feel free to contact me at 503-641-1916 or deanna@drinkwaterforlife.net.