Three Seasons Ayurveda

According to Ayurveda, the basis of life is explained by the five elements (ether, air, fire, water, and earth), which are found in our universe and are understood by the qualities that surround us in nature (hot-cold, wet-dry, heavy-light, mobile-stable, etc.).

Water is the fourth of these five elements and has the qualities of being cool, moist, heavy, flowing, smooth, soft, and gross. It represents fluidity and cohesiveness, bringing one of the most basic nourishments to existence.

Ayurveda understands water in the body in five distinct ways, known as the five types of the Kapha dosha. First, water protects the mouth and the actions of chewing while breaking down what we ingest. Second, it protects the stomach against acids and aids with digestion. Third, it stabilizes the flow of neurological impulses and protects the nerves and brain. Four, it protects the joints from the friction of motion. Fifth, it protects the respiratory system from the drying movement of breath.

Our bodies are 70 percent water, and as we go about our day, we use up that water. So it is important to stay hydrated and to consume water rich in minerals. Water contains calcium, magnesium, sodium, copper, selenium, and potassium, and is responsible for bone and cardiovascular health while boosting immunity and supplying antioxidants. Electrolytes protect all biochemical reactions in the body, filling the spaces in and between cells and forming structures of larger molecules such as protein and glycogen. Water is also required for digestion, absorption, transportation, dissolving nutrients, and the elimination of waste products.

Human requirements for water are related to metabolic needs and are highly variable and depend on individual metabolism. Solid foods contribute approximately 20 percent of total water intake, and the remainder comes from dietary intake. The average person loses three to four liters of fluid each day from sweat and bowel movements, and the water vapor from breathing is responsible for one to two liters per day. Exercise can increase the rate of water loss.

As your fluids drop, it causes blood volume and blood pressure to drop, which can cause the concentration of salt to increase, and your brain triggers thirst. Swelling, inflammation, and water retention could also make you drink more water, and consuming salty or dry foods can also deplete fluid levels. Dehydration causes poor circulation, poor digestion, and fatigue.

Many practitioners believe you should consume half your body weight (in ounces) of water or other beverages per day. It is believed that drinking a cup of warm water on awakening will start your elimination process and a cup of warm water 20 minutes before eating can improve digestion, but ice water will slow down the digestive, assimilation, and elimination processes. Excessive drinking causes excessive urination and the loss of important electrolytes.

There is much controversy about the quality of tap water, but most municipal water sources are considering good quality. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates public drinking water sources and production, and American Water Works Association (AWWA) is responsible for the quality and standards of the local water supplies, providing annual reports on their quality. The FDA oversees the bottled and processed water industry, which is a $16 billon per year industry.

Types of Water

Tap Water is processed using basic filtration techniques like sand that filters out the big pieces of stuff floating down the river. Flocculation (chemicals) is added to the water to get smaller particles to coagulate and float so they can be removed, and, finally, chlorine is added to kill bacteria and microorganisms. Tap water in most cases is potable (drinkable) according to EPA.

Spring Water is actually "pure" water but can contain many of the same impurities found in drilled wells or tap water. Natural spring water is derived from an underground formation in which water flows naturally to the surface of the earth. Spring water must be collected only at the spring or through an underground formation feeding the spring. The term "100% pure" refers not to the absence of impurities in the water but to the source of the water itself.
In most cases, spring water is pumped into large tanker trucks and transported to a bottling facility where spring water goes through a carbon and micro filtration processes that removes chlorine and other impurities.

Filtered Water is typically municipal tap water that is run through carbon filters to remove the chlorine and sometimes through a micron filter before being bottled. In general it's not much different from many spring waters coming from a "natural" source, but it goes through minimal filtration and is then bottled and shipped to market.

Purified Water represents the fastest-growing segment of the bottled water industry because it's purer than other types of waters. Once the municipal source water enters the bottling plant, it goes through several processes, which include ozonation, reverse osmosis, distillation, or deionization, which ensures and meets the purified or sterile standard of the FDA. If you're buying water for higher quality and higher purity reasons, then purified water is your best.

Distilled Water is process by distillation, where the pure water is boiled to remove contaminants. These contaminants are inorganic materials, minerals, metals, etc., and have a very high melting point, so as the water (with its contaminants) is boiled, the pure water turns into steam and is captured and cooled.

Mineral Water is natural water containing no fewer than 250 parts per million of relative mineral and trace elements from its natural source. No minerals are added to this product.

Sparkling Waters can either be from a natural source or are carbonated (carbon dioxide gas has been added under pressure), making the water effervescent. In some cases, additives such as sodium chloride or sodium bicarbonate are added.

Artesian Water is the same as other types of groundwater but the difference is how it gets to the surface. An artesian well doesn't require a pump to bring water to the surface; this occurs when there is enough pressure in the aquifer (water-bearing rock) that forces the water to the surface without any sort of assistance.

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