

DAILY LIQUID INTAKE

The American Water Works Association (AWWA), at a press conference on 11 February, released a few general guidelines for men and women on daily intake of water from all sources. The guidelines are from a report by a leading US science research organisation.

“We don’t offer any rule of thumb based on how many glasses of water people should drink a day, because our hydration needs can be met through a variety of sources in addition to water,” said Lawrence Appel, chair of the panel that wrote the report and professor of epidemiology and international health at John Hopkins University.

Based on national data from the United States and Canada, the panel set the recommended dietary intake of 2.7 ℓ for women and 3.7 ℓ for men. Those who are more physically active or live in hot climates may need to consume more water, Appel advised.

About 80% of people’s total water consumption comes from drinking water and other beverages and 20% from food. All sources of liquid – including caffeinated drinks – are countable for the recommended intake.

A question arose at the press conference about the validity of two common myths about drinking water:

- ◆ If a person is thirsty, he or she is already dehydrated.
- ◆ Drinking enough water so that a person’s urine is pale is a measure of adequate hydration

Appel noted that thirst is an adequate stimulus for maintaining hydration. “An individual can be transiently dehydrated,” he said, indicating that throughout a day a person will naturally consume enough liquid. He also noted that the colour of a person’s urine is a “crude index” of liquid intake.

Appel said that conditions in which blood sodium levels are abnormally low – leading to a danger of hyponatremia, or too much water intake – is very rare.

WRC SANITATION STRATEGY ANNOUNCED

The Water Research Commission (WRC) has published a document which outlines its new sanitation research strategy.

The research strategy focuses on the provision of basic sanitation and hygiene education, with an emphasis on the challenges facing South Africa’s rural areas where water and sanitation issues are of critical importance due to the lack of resources and capacity.

Says Jay Bhagwan, WRC Director: Water Use and Waste Management, while the WRC recognizes the needs of the urban informal and peri-urban areas, these needs will be addressed under a separate research programme.

He says the strategy presented in the document is the culmination of a thorough consultative process. This included the identification of needs via a questionnaire survey addressing sanitation professionals in the sector, and two workshops attended by national stakeholders and local or regional representatives of Water Services Authorities and Service Providers. These processes have provided a wealth of information and knowledge, and have identified key issues requiring investigation.

The strategy will guide the topics and areas that the WRC aims to fund over the next few years through both solicited and non-solicited projects. The WRC, however, welcomes any ideas and constructive criticism which would enrich the strategy and allow the WRC to further update and upgrade the current strategy.

For more information on the Sanitation Strategy, please visit the WRC’s website – www.wrc.org.za