

Employee Safety

How Can You Encourage Employee Hydration?

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How can you encourage employee hydration when they say they aren't thirsty? Hydration at the workplace is an important issue – there's no question about that. But when your employees resist taking regular drinks because they don't feel thirsty, it can throw a wrench into your hydration plan.

There's one great way to get around this issue: educate your workers. It's a common misconception that thirst is the first indicator that your body needs more fluid. In all likelihood, your employees probably think they are being prudent by drinking when they feel thirsty. In fact, the feeling of being thirsty indicates that mild dehydration is already starting to set in.

You need to clear up this misconception. To start, let your workers know why dehydration is an issue. This could be as simple as sending an email blast at the beginning of each week (or maybe every morning for a week or two) with some key facts about dehydration and its effects (learn more about *The Dangers of On-the-Job Dehydration*).

Here are some notable facts you could include:

1. **Dehydration has a significant impact on physical ability.** Losing just 2% or 3% of the body's total water volume can result in a 20% decrease in energy levels.
2. **Dehydration causes concentration and memory to suffer.** Studies show that as dehydration sets in, it becomes difficult to focus and retain information. Hand-eye coordination is also impaired.
3. **Even mild dehydration can cause headaches and fatigue.** Ill employees are not only less productive at work, but also at home with their families.
4. **Dehydration impacts reaction time.** Studies show that 3% dehydration slows reaction times just as much as a 0.08 blood alcohol level. This substantially increases the chances of a workplace accident.

Next, work on fostering a workplace atmosphere that helps your employees stay hydrated throughout the day – so they rarely reach the point where they feel thirsty.

1. **Mandate water breaks.** Have employees take three-minute water breaks at regular intervals throughout the day. Keep large jugs of cold, filtered water easily accessible.
2. **Post hydration reminders.** Sometimes workers simply forget to drink until that feeling of thirst creeps up.
3. **Provide reusable water bottles.** These encourage workers to keep water and other fluids on hand at all times.
4. **Remove sodas from the workplace.** While water works to hydrate the body, caffeine and sodas contribute to dehydration. Consider removing drink vending machines altogether, or replacing sodas and similar drinks with healthier alternatives.
5. **Offer fruit throughout the day.** About 20% of our daily water intake comes from fruit. Keeping some on hand at the office or in the break room is a great way to encourage hydration – even in employees who don't think they need water.
6. **Host a water challenge.** It takes 21 days to make a habit stick, so why not hold a 21-day event challenging employees to meet or exceed the recommended daily intake of water? Make sure they track their progress and reward milestones with branded gear or other perks.

While there are a number of ways to encourage employees to hydrate themselves, it all starts with ensuring they understand why it's important. Once they know the risks that dehydration poses, you'll

be dealing with a line-up at the water station instead of sluggish workers.

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