

How to Detect Skin Cancer on Your Feet

This month, we're talking about skin cancer and I wanted to call your attention to the fact that you could have skin cancer on your feet and not experience any kind of tell-tale foot pain.

Even if you have regular skin checks to rule out skin cancer, many examinations forget the delicate skin on the tops and bottoms of your feet.

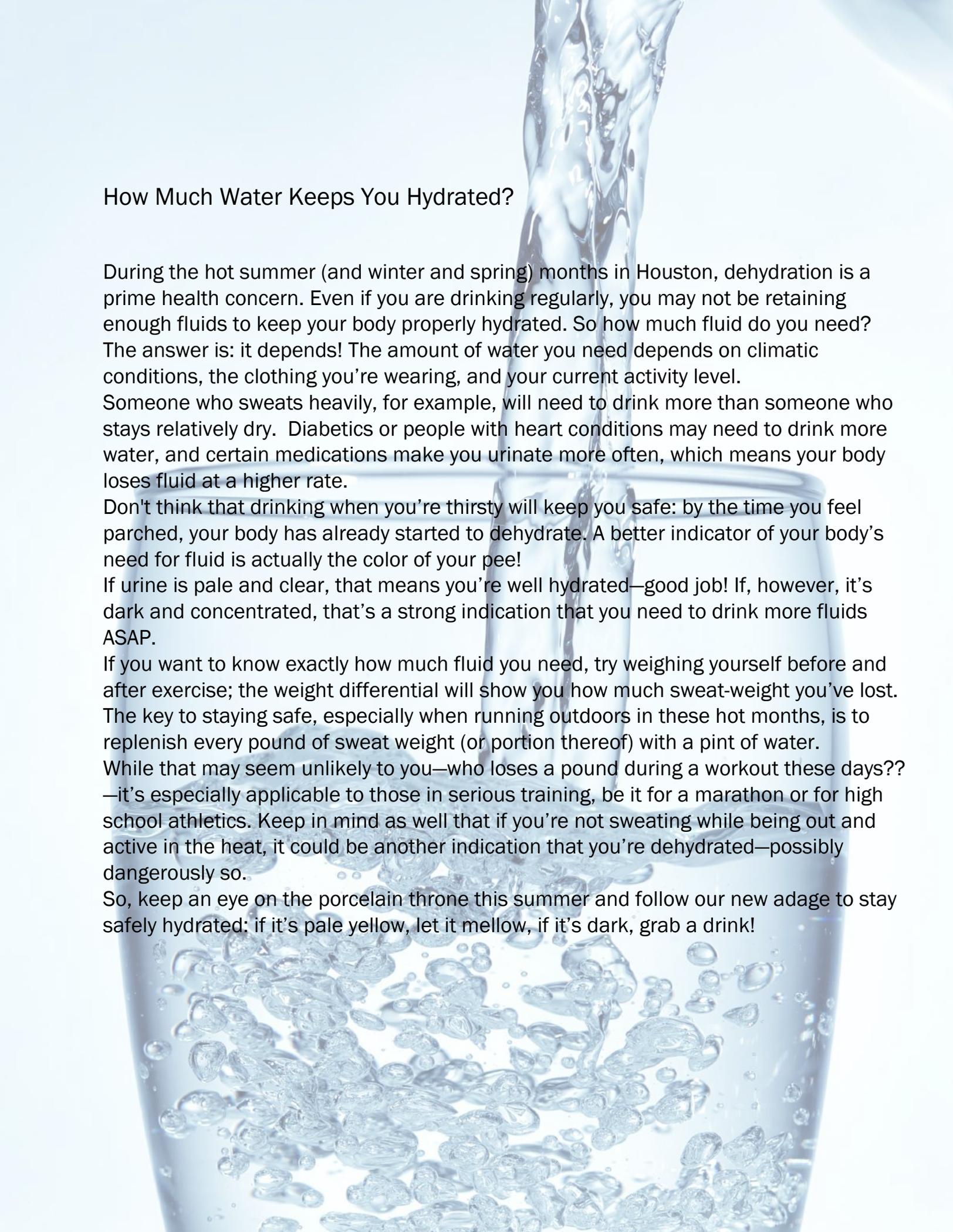
Skin cancer on your feet is a little different than on the rest of your body, as it's more commonly the result of a virus than exposure to the sun (especially when it manifests on the bottom of your feet.) When you come in for a visit to the office, I always look out for unusual skin patches on the foot, so it's often a podiatrist like myself, rather than a dermatologist, that diagnoses this condition.

If you are doing a home skin cancer exam (which I highly recommend), you should know the following common features of skin cancers of the feet:

- Feet that keep cracking, itching or bleeding (cancer may have been present for a while but, since it is painless, these signs may be the only recognizable manifestation.)
- Non-healing sores, bumps that crack and/or bleed, nodules with rolled edges or scaly areas may all be indications of skin cancer of the feet.
- Pearly white bumps and or oozy patches that get crusty could be indicators of basal cell cancers. On the foot, basal cell cancers can often be mistaken for non-cancerous skin tumors or benign ulcers.
- Small, scaly bumps (possibly appearing to be inflamed) can be a sign of early-squamous cell carcinoma, the most common type of skin cancer of the foot. Painless but itchy, this type of cancer is often misdiagnosed as a plantar wart, fungal infection, eczema, or ulcer. If caught early, it can usually be contained to the skin of the foot but, if left untreated, this cancer can spread and become deadly.

The only way to confirm whether or not an unusual patch of skin on your foot is cancerous is to have your podiatrist perform a skin biopsy, which is a simple procedure in which a small sample of skin is obtained and sent to a lab for a skin pathologist to examine. If the biopsy determines you have skin cancer, your podiatrist will help you determine your next course of action.

Each year, about 2 million Americans are diagnosed with non-melanoma skin cancers. The best hope for positive outcomes after a diagnosis are early detection and treatment, so if you see any suspicious spots on the skin of your feet or anywhere else on your body, schedule an appointment with your doctor immediately.



How Much Water Keeps You Hydrated?

During the hot summer (and winter and spring) months in Houston, dehydration is a prime health concern. Even if you are drinking regularly, you may not be retaining enough fluids to keep your body properly hydrated. So how much fluid do you need? The answer is: it depends! The amount of water you need depends on climatic conditions, the clothing you're wearing, and your current activity level.

Someone who sweats heavily, for example, will need to drink more than someone who stays relatively dry. Diabetics or people with heart conditions may need to drink more water, and certain medications make you urinate more often, which means your body loses fluid at a higher rate.

Don't think that drinking when you're thirsty will keep you safe: by the time you feel parched, your body has already started to dehydrate. A better indicator of your body's need for fluid is actually the color of your pee!

If urine is pale and clear, that means you're well hydrated—good job! If, however, it's dark and concentrated, that's a strong indication that you need to drink more fluids ASAP.

If you want to know exactly how much fluid you need, try weighing yourself before and after exercise; the weight differential will show you how much sweat-weight you've lost. The key to staying safe, especially when running outdoors in these hot months, is to replenish every pound of sweat weight (or portion thereof) with a pint of water.

While that may seem unlikely to you—who loses a pound during a workout these days??—it's especially applicable to those in serious training, be it for a marathon or for high school athletics. Keep in mind as well that if you're not sweating while being out and active in the heat, it could be another indication that you're dehydrated—possibly dangerously so.

So, keep an eye on the porcelain throne this summer and follow our new adage to stay safely hydrated: if it's pale yellow, let it mellow, if it's dark, grab a drink!

3 Common Golf Injuries (And 1 Easy Catch-All Solution)

If you haven't played golf for a while, or even if you are a regular player, you need to watch out for these common foot injuries that may keep you from teeing up to play 18 holes.

Heel Pain

Also known as plantar fasciitis, the discomfort caused by inflammation or tears in the connective tissue at the heel can occur due to excessive pronation in the feet (Pronation is the body's response to running or walking; in feet, pronation involves the elongation and flattening of the arch to allow the foot to roll inward.) Since golfers often walk in cleats for long distances, they are susceptible to this kind of heel pain, which is typically worse first thing in the morning, right after you get out of bed.

Corns and Calluses

Calluses and corns form over a period of time because repeated pressure or friction on one area of skin causes the skin to die and form a hard, protective surface. Ill-fitting golf shoes could cause your feet to develop these spots.

Tendonitis

This painful condition is caused by inflammation of the tendon that runs along the arch of the foot. It is a very common golfing injury because golfers put tons of pressure on this part of their feet when they gear up for a swing.

These injuries may sound scary, but don't worry; there's a simple, preventative solution for most of these problems: custom orthotics. When you wear custom insoles in your golf shoes, you allow your body to establish a better point of contact with the ground when executing your swing. Orthotics also stabilize your feet, distribute your weight evenly and correct your posture during golf, helping prevent or alleviate many sport-specific injuries. Some research even suggests that orthotics can improve your game and help you hit the ball with more force.

If you find that foot pain is keeping you from enjoying golf, your Houston podiatrist can help you get back on the green. Schedule an appointment today for a comprehensive foot evaluation that will help you stay comfortable through 18 holes of play.

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Tanglewood Foot Specialists
1011 Augusta, Suite 202
Houston, TX 77057

713-785-7881
TanglewoodFootSpecialists.com

Sudoku Corner

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June's Answers:

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1	4	7	2	8	3	9	5	6
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7	1	9	3	2	8	5	6	4
5	2	8	4	6	9	7	1	3
4	6	3	5	7	1	8	2	9

From the desk of Dr. Andrew Schneider:

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