

Educational Forum

15 days 'water only fast': a tough but a challenging personal experience

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ABSTRACT

Hydrotherapy is the use of water in the treatment of diseases. It is an effective method of detoxification. It was formerly called hydropathy. Water comprises from 75% body weight in infants to 55% in elderly and is essential for cellular homeostasis and life. The use of water for therapy has been around for hundreds of years. The theory behind it is that water has many properties that give it the ability to heal: water can store and carry heat and energy. Though water fasting offers the quickest detox and strongest therapeutic effect, it is no doubt the most challenging fast to perform in the first few days.

Keywords: Hydrotherapy, Water only fast

INTRODUCTION

Water comprises from 75% body weight in infants to 55% in elderly and is essential for cellular homeostasis and life.¹ One form of water therapy, advocated by some alternative medicine proponents, is the consumption of a gulf of water upon waking in order to "cleanse the bowel". A litre to a litre-and-a-half is the common amount ingested. This water therapy, also known as Indian, Chinese, or Japanese Water Therapy, is claimed to have a wide range of health benefits, or at least no adverse effects.^{2,3}

Advocates of water therapy claim that application of water therapy at first will cause multiple bowel movements until the body adjusts to the increased amount of fluid.² While ingesting about a litre-and-a-half of water is generally considered harmless, excessive consumption of water can lead to water intoxication, an urgent and dangerous medical condition.⁴

Other popular forms of water therapy included the sea-water treatment of Richard Russell, the contemporary version of which is thalassotherapy. This however was never known or marketed as water cure in the sense that became synonymous with hydropathy, now hydrotherapy. Rather, Russell's efforts have been credited with playing a role, along with broader social movements, in the populist "sea side mania of the second half of the eighteenth century", which itself was of some significance, with some activities reminiscent of modern-day of modern day spas.⁵ The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has been recently asked to revise existing recommended intakes of essential substances with a physiological effect including water since this nutrient is essential for life and health.⁶

METHODS

The subject here is myself and the fact which motivated me to take up this water fast was that i being myself med-

ical doctor, realized that my body strongly needs detoxification. I had severe joint pains, though not joint deformities (inspite of being RA factor for rheumatoid arthritis positive for the last 10 years). Painful swelling of small joints of hands was a frequent and common phenomenon.

I got inspiration from my father who had himself done water fasting successfully for 21 days, about 30 years ago, under the able guidance of an old renowned Jain saint of North India. My father was my mentor as well as my guide and supported me morally throughout the period.

Day 1 of water fast was really not very difficult as most of the Indians have the habit of fasting for a day, on some or the other occasion (full moon/festival etc)

Day 2 and Day 3 were tough as there were episodes of severe headaches, feeling of extreme nausea and vomiting.

Day 4 was the worst. As the stomach keeps on doing its normal function - the act of producing acid to digest food, there is excessive acid accumulation and in the absence of food, leads to severe bouts of vomiting. This day was the turning point. It is after this landmark day that the stomach stops producing acid as it experiences the absence of food in it. The journey ahead becomes comfortable.

Day 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were comfortable. Just four to five litres of RO purified water, regular enema (3-4 times a day) and adequate rest. I being a doctor myself, kept on getting regular blood tests for any evidence of hypoglycemia, ketoacidosis, hyperuricemia etc. I had lost nearly 10 kg in 10 days.

It was on Day 14, when I experienced a very typical bad taste in my mouth, I got my blood test done. It revealed very high serum uric acid level (>18 mg/dL): normal values are <7.2mg/dl. It was because, by then, the muscle protein had started to break down to give energy to the body. The fat deposits had nearly depleted by then.

Day 15 was my last day of water fast. It was the time when my father told me to break the fast to avert any medical emergency situation, as lot of uric acid had accumulated in the body.

I broke the fast with lemon and honey - the natural acid (lemon) and energy provider (honey). I was feeling very energetic, detoxified and a very healthy person.

DISCUSSION

There is no more gruelling type of fast or cleansing diet than a pure water fast. On that fast, you can only have water. According to many alternative health experts, the health benefits can be extraordinary. Fasting allows the

body time to heal from all of the toxins and pollutants in our food and environment. The best part is, it costs nothing to do.

Water excretion via the kidney removes solutes from the blood, and a minimum obligate urine volume is required to remove the solute load with a maximum output volume of 1 L/h.⁷

A person should be prepared for the various side effects like headaches, dizziness and nausea which may be experienced during fasting, before any of these symptoms become overwhelming. Water deprivation and dehydration can lead to the development of headache.⁸

The European Food Safety Agency refers positively to the possibility of expressing water intake recommendations in ml/kcal as a function of energy requirements.⁹ A colon cleanse before the fast may help to maintain focus and experience less discomfort during the actual fast. A relaxed environment, adequate rest and a stress free routine may make the period of fast comfortable and enjoyable.

CONCLUSION

Water only fast, no doubt, is a very challenging but a definite way of detoxifying the body. The fast's main purpose is to cleanse the body systems and organs off cumulated toxins, and in some cases to lose weight. Research has established that fasting can protect us against neurodegenerative diseases like alzheimers and parkinsons.

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