

Wellness News

Hydration: One of the Simplest Ways to Support a Healthy Spine



When most people think about spinal health, they focus on posture, exercise, stretching, and specific Gonstead chiropractic care. One of the most overlooked factors in maintaining a healthy spine is proper hydration.

Water plays a critical role in the health and function of your intervertebral discs—the cushion-like structures located between each vertebra. These discs act as the spine's shock absorbers, protecting the bones from everyday forces such as walking, lifting, bending, and twisting. Because these discs are primarily composed of water, staying adequately hydrated is essential for maintaining their strength, flexibility, and ability to withstand daily stress.

The Bottom Line: Healthy spinal discs depend on healthy hydration. Water helps maintain disc height, supports flexibility, lubricates spinal joints, nourishes tissues, and assists the muscles that stabilize the spine. While hydration alone cannot prevent every spinal condition, it is one of the simplest and most effective habits for supporting long-term spinal health.

Combined with regular care in our office, movement, exercise, proper posture, and healthy lifestyle choices, staying hydrated can help keep your spine functioning at its best for years to come.

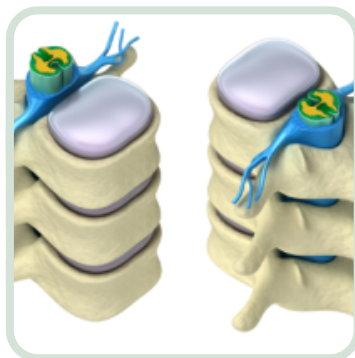
HYDRATION

AND SPINAL HEALTH

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

A study published in the Journal of Biomechanical Engineering investigated how hydration affects the mechanical properties of healthy intervertebral discs. Researchers found that spinal discs possess a remarkable ability to absorb water due to their high concentration of proteoglycans—specialized molecules that attract and retain fluid. The study demonstrated that hydration significantly influences the swelling behavior and mechanical function of disc tissues. Properly hydrated discs maintained healthier tissue properties and were better equipped to handle compressive forces placed on the spine.

The researchers also noted that aging, injury, degeneration, and the normal stresses of daily life can reduce the water content within spinal discs. As hydration decreases, the discs become less resilient and less capable of absorbing shock efficiently. Over time, this may contribute to disc degeneration and changes in spinal mechanics.



Maintains Disc Height and Cushioning

Intervertebral discs rely on water to maintain their shape and height. Well-hydrated discs remain plump and resilient, allowing them to distribute pressure evenly across the spine. When dehydration becomes chronic, discs may flatten and lose their shock-absorbing capacity, increasing wear and tear on the spine.

Supports Healthy Joint Movement

The joints connecting the vertebrae depend on synovial fluid for smooth motion. Water is a primary component of this lubricating fluid. Adequate hydration helps these joints move freely, reducing stiffness and supporting normal spinal mobility.

Improves Muscle Function

The muscles supporting your spine require proper hydration to function efficiently. Dehydrated muscles fatigue more quickly and are more prone to tightness, cramping, and discomfort. When spinal muscles become fatigued or tense, additional stress is transferred to the joints and discs.

Enhances Nutrient Delivery

Unlike many tissues in the body, spinal discs have a limited blood supply. They depend on fluid movement to help deliver nutrients and remove waste products. Proper hydration supports this process and helps maintain healthier disc tissue.

Signs You May Need More Water

Many people don't realize they are mildly dehydrated. Common signs include:

- Fatigue or low energy
- Headaches
- Dry mouth
- Muscle cramps
- Dark-colored urine
- Increased feelings of stiffness, particularly in the morning or after activity

While these symptoms can have many causes, they may indicate that your body could benefit from increased water intake.

Simple Ways to Stay Hydrated

Protecting your spine may be as simple as making hydration a daily priority.

Experts commonly recommend drinking approximately 30 to 50 ounces (1 to 1.5 liters) of water each day as a baseline. Individuals who exercise regularly, work outdoors, or live in hot climates may require more.

Some easy hydration strategies include:

- Start your morning with a glass of water.
- Carry a reusable water bottle throughout the day.
- Drink water consistently rather than waiting until you feel thirsty.
- Increase fluid intake during exercise or hot weather.
- Include water-rich foods such as fruits and vegetables in your diet.

Proper hydration is one of the simplest yet most important ways to support spinal health. The intervertebral discs between the vertebrae are composed primarily of water and act as the spine's natural shock absorbers. Throughout the day, these discs lose fluid as they are compressed by gravity and movement, then rehydrate during rest. Research has shown that hydration directly affects the ability of spinal discs to absorb shock and maintain healthy function. Water also helps lubricate spinal joints, supports muscle function, and delivers essential nutrients to the tissues that support the spine. For patients receiving Gonstead chiropractic care, staying well-hydrated can help maintain spinal mobility and support the body's ability to heal and adapt following adjustments. While drinking water is essential, proper hydration also depends on maintaining healthy electrolyte levels. Electrolytes such as sodium, potassium, magnesium, and calcium help regulate fluid balance, support nerve communication, and promote healthy muscle contractions. Thorne Catalyte® provides these key electrolytes along with additional nutrients that support hydration and recovery. By helping the body absorb and utilize water more efficiently, electrolyte supplementation can complement the goals of Gonstead chiropractic care by supporting healthy nervous system function, reducing muscle fatigue, and promoting optimal spinal performance. Together, adequate water intake and proper electrolyte balance create a strong foundation for long-term spinal health and overall wellness.

THORNE

ELECTROLYTES



Spine and Dine

Grilled Pineapple Chicken



Instructions

Grilled Pineapple Chicken

Ingredients

- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 - 1 cup unsweetened pineapple juice
 - 3/4 cup ketchup
 - 1/2 cup low-sodium soy sauce
 - 1/2 cup (107 g.) packed light brown sugar
 - 1 Tbsp. finely chopped peeled ginger
 - 4 (6- to 8-oz.) boneless, skinless chicken breasts 1 tsp. vegetable oil, plus more for grill
 - 1 pineapple, cored sliced into rings, rings halved
 - Thinly sliced scallions, for serving
1. **Step 1:** In a large bowl, whisk garlic, pineapple juice, ketchup, soy sauce, brown sugar, and ginger until combined.
 2. **Step 2:** Place chicken in a large resealable plastic bag. Pour in marinade. Refrigerate at least 2 hours and up to overnight.
 3. **Step 3:** Prepare a grill for high heat; preheat 5 minutes (or heat a grill pan over high heat). Clean and oil grates.
 4. **Step 4:** Grill chicken, basting with marinade and flipping occasionally, until charred and an instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part registers 165°, about 8 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate.
 5. **Step 5:** In a medium bowl, toss pineapple with oil. Grill pineapple, flipping occasionally, until charred, about 2 minutes per side.
 6. **Step 6:** Transfer chicken and pineapples to a platter. Top with scallions.