

Hydration Fact Sheet

The Facts About... Healthy hydration for the Foodservice Sector

Why is hydration important for catering and foodservice workers?

1. The heat and speed of the professional kitchen means that head chefs, catering and hospitality managers need to remember that workers need regular hydration to work at optimal levels.
2. Hydration in a busy kitchen is essential. Even a small fall in hydration levels can mean a drop in concentration, according to research, which can lead to mistakes, slow service or even accidents in the kitchen.
3. Scientists say that a loss of 2% of body mass due to dehydration can impair performance.

What are the dangers of dehydration?

Even small levels of dehydration can create headaches, lethargy, or just an overall lack of alertness. In the long term it can create problems with the renal system and our mental functioning, as well as our cardio-vascular system. Concentration lapses that may lead to simple but harmless mistakes in an office can lead to far more serious risks in a food preparation area. Dehydration can also cause skin irritations caused by excessive sweating; heat cramps which are caused when the body's salt and moisture levels are depleted; heat exhaustion; or even heat stroke.



What's the best means of providing on-site hydration?

Water is a good choice as it is calorie & caffeine free and is tooth-kind. Water coolers are safe, hygienic, cost effective and convenient... but do make sure that you have a cooler supplied by an accredited BWCA member, who undergoes rigorous annual safety inspections.

Can you give guidance on the best way to provide safe hydration to catering workers?

- Advise colleagues not to wait until they feel thirsty - as by then they are already dehydrated. Drink frequently especially during hot weather. Once thirst is felt, mental performance can decrease significantly.
- Remember front of house staff such as waiters need to hydrate too.
- Encourage them to take water breaks in hot weather or if the kitchen is especially hot.
- Ensure that if using bottled water coolers, the bottles are stored in a cool, dry, clean place.
- To ensure you find an accredited water cooler distributor, check <http://www.bwca.org.uk/find-a-member.php>

What's best – a mains-fed or bottled water cooler?

This will depend on the layout of your kitchen or staff areas and whether there is plumbing available for a mains-fed cooler or storage for a bottled water cooler.

About this Fact Sheet

This Fact Sheet has been produced by the British Water Cooler Association, the most respected trade body representing companies supplying bottled water and mains fed coolers for over 20 years. BWCA Members are obliged by strict Codes of Practice and best conduct and are audited for compliance annually by 3rd party inspection organisations.

Other publications include *Essential Care of your Water Cooler*, obtainable FREE by emailing info@bwca.org.uk