

Hydration Fact Sheet

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

Why is hydration important for public sector employees?

Public sector managers need to be aware of three things:

1. By law, employers must provide access to water in the workplace.
2. Scientists say there is little doubt that performance during prolonged, continuous exercise in the heat is impaired by levels of dehydration. A loss of just 2% of body mass can impair performance.
3. When access to potable mains water may be limited, a bottled water cooler is the best bet.

Won't any fluid do?

The average British worker drinks around 5 cups of tea or coffee daily - that's 48,000 cups of caffeinated liquid during their working life. Asked why, nearly 6 out of 10 (58%) people said that it was just habit; and a quarter of those questioned didn't drink caffeinated beverages at home. There's nothing wrong with the occasional cup of coffee or the odd soft drink but employers have a duty of care to encourage healthy hydration. Water is kind to teeth and calorie free.

What exactly does the law require?

Keeping workforces hydrated is important. The Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992 state that an 'adequate supply of wholesome drinking water' must be provided, and that it be readily available at suitable and clearly marked places.

http://www.worksmart.org.uk/health/does_my_employer_have_to_provide_drinking

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 and digestive systems.

Do public buildings that are open to the public need to supply free water?

No, but for local authorities and other public sector organisations whose premises are open to the public (such as swimming pools, health centres, hospitals or gymnasias) water coolers can also provide a valuable public service by leading the way in good health.

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

- 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.
- If your staff members drive or operate machinery in the course of their work make sure they don't drink whilst at the wheel but that they have enough water in advance to keep the brain active and alert.
- Encourage them to take water breaks in hot weather.
- Ensure that if using bottled water coolers, the bottles are stored in a cool, dry, clean place.
- To ensure you find an accredited water distributor, check <http://www.bwca.org.uk/find-a-member.php>

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 under an obligation to adhere to strict Codes of Practice and best conduct and are audited for compliance annually by 3rd party inspection organisations.

Choose a BWCA Member – for hydration you can trust

