

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 79: HYDRATION HACKS FOR HEALING BINGE EATING

What does a shimmering pool on a hot desert plain have to do with you and binge eating? Keep listening!

Welcome to *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. This is the place to hear about how you can pair the emerging brain science about why you binge with powerful life coaching to help you stop. If you want to explore an evidence-based, non-clinical approach to end binge eating, you're in the right place.

It's time to free yourself. You have more power than you know. To find out more, go to www.holdingthespace.co and click Programs.

And now, your host, Internal-Family-Systems-Level-3-Trained and Master-Coach-Certified Martha Ayim.

Hey there! Welcome to my latest episode of The Done Bingeing Podcast!

Today, we're talking about a topic that's as important to binge eaters as it is overlooked . . . hydration!

I bet you weren't expecting that! And that makes sense to me.

When we think about how to stop bingeing—often the first places we look at relate to food and serious exercise.

If you're anything like I was when I was binge eating, whenever I tried to get myself to stop bingeing, I immediately focused on reducing how much I ate and on increasing how long and how hard I exercised. I'd try to eat way more salad and far less cake. I'd try to get in more steps on the StairMaster and more laps around the gym.

But what was so distressing for me was that, despite all my best efforts, the bingeing returned sooner or later—usually sooner.

What I didn't realize back then was that there were several easy quick-win foundations that didn't focus on food or working out that that could still really help me. And once I had those basics down, it made it so much easier to understand and address why I was bingeing.

Many key supports you can put in place to help you heal binge eating are things that you can start today.

I'm working on an episode that'll share 10 of these quick-win foundations with you to help set you up for success. AND I'm creating a checklist for you to download FOR FREE so you can have a handy reminder of these 10 foundations closeby whenever you need it.

For now, I wanted to give you a sneak peek into one of those quick wins . . . water!

We'll look at why our bodies crave hydration, how to recognize some of our unique hydration needs, and the power of tuning in to our thirst. From unraveling the science behind hydration to practical tips, I'm going to quench your curiosity about all things hydration!

So, grab your favorite cuppa - and this time I like seriously meant it! - and let's dive in.

Here's what we're going to talk about:

- What happens for you when we explore the idea of hydration
- Why hydration matters, especially for binge eaters
- Hydration guidelines
- Why hydration can be a struggle
- Your experience of your current hydration levels
- Exploring a hydration goal
- Easy steps toward a hydration goal
- Anticipating and addressing challenges

Before we go any further, please know that I fully support you consulting with a healthcare professional that you trust to help tailor hydration and nutritional needs to your individual circumstances.

And if you want to read more about what we're discussing in this episode, please check out the transcript where I list the sources I turned to to gather this information.

Alright.

What happens for you when we explore the idea of drinking enough water?

For me, I was told with disgust to "just drink water" by people who didn't understand my bingeing.

I do believe that they wanted to help me *and* my whole being recalls the slam of judgment.

And all the diets I was put on or went on felt punitive and defined by deprivation, and I lumped the edict to drink more water in with punishment, as well as with the enduring feeling of hunger, dissatisfaction, and dismissal I felt on every diet I tried.

But once I had a loving and trusting relationship with myself and I just knew that I, Martha, wasn't going to dismiss my own experience, I was able to revisit many ideas, including the suggestions to drink more water.

And that's what I want to offer here on my podcast. A place to explore ideas without agendas or judgment, a place for you to see what feels right for you and what doesn't.

Why hydration matters

As I mentioned, being able to think about water from a place of compassion is what made an important turning point possible for me because hydration really does matter.

Studies show that dehydration can impact cognitive functions such as short-term memory, numerical ability, psychomotor function, and sustained attention, with more severe dehydration leading to greater cognitive deficits. Dehydration often results in feelings of decreased alertness and increased difficulty concentrating (Ganio et al, 2011).

And dehydration can lead to serious health issues, including an increased risk of kidney stones, urinary tract infections, hypertension, and stroke. Prolonged dehydration can also affect kidney function, especially in older adults (Liska et al, 2019).

Despite the importance of being well hydrated, studies suggest that up to 75% of Americans may suffer from chronic dehydration (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.).

And, on top of this, adequate hydration is *particularly* important for binge eaters for several reasons:

- mixed signals
- metabolism & digestion
- emotional stability
- physical health
- setting a foundation

Let's take these one at a time.

Mixed signals: Physiological signals for hunger and thirst originate in the same part of the brain, so they're easily confused. We can turn to food when what we really need is water (Zou et al, 2022).

Our genius human body knows that many foods have a high water content, which is another reason why we can seek food when we're dehydrated (Popkin, D'Anci, & Rosenberg, 2010). Water is essential to life, so it makes sense that dehydration is a stressor for our bodies (El-Sharkawy, Sahota, & Lobo, 2015).

Drinking water before or between meals can help us get clear about whether we're really hungry, or actually thirsty.

You know, in the landscape of our minds, mirages can lead us astray, much like a shimmering pool on a desert plain. Just as the promise of water when none is there, sometimes we think we hear "We're hungry!" when the real signal is for thirst. Recognizing and understanding these signals can be an oasis we've been searching for, guiding us to nourish our bodies with more accuracy.

Metabolism & digestion: Water is essential for the body's metabolic processes, including digestion. Staying hydrated helps ensure the digestive system functions efficiently, helping in nutrient absorption and waste elimination, which can be compromised by binge eating.

Emotional stability: Dehydration can affect mood and cognitive function, leading to irritability, anxiety, or depression, which can trigger binge eating episodes. Adequate hydration helps maintain emotional balance and can reduce stress-related eating.

Physical health: Binge eating can strain the body, particularly the digestive system. Proper hydration supports overall physical health, helping to mitigate some of the negative health impacts associated with binge eating, such as gastrointestinal distress and metabolic imbalances.

Setting a foundation: Focusing on hydration can be a positive step towards healthier habits. It introduces a routine and mindfulness about bodily needs, which set a foundation for the attunement that's so helpful in healing binge eating.

For these reasons, maintaining adequate hydration can be part of a broader strategy to manage emotional and physiological triggers of binge eating. By staying hydrated, we may better regulate appetite and mood, potentially reducing the urge to binge.

Hydration guidelines

I know what you're thinking. Okay! I get it, I get it. Hydration matters. But how much water should I drink in a day?

The British Dietetic Association says that all types of drinks, including those with alcohol and caffeine, can contribute to meeting fluid needs.

And, let's pause right here. Please, do not say that Martha said I can drink 8 cups of wine a day and that's awesome for my hydration needs.

Why? Because the proviso is that beverages are consumed responsibly and within recommended guidelines. No guideline is going to recommend 8 cups of wine a day.

Individualized hydration strategies are really important, especially for older adults or those with specific health conditions—so remember to ask a trusted health care practitioner if you want more guidance here (British Dietetic Association, n.d.).

Here are some common and trusted hydration guidelines often mentioned by health authorities:

Eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day: This is commonly known as the "8x8 rule," and it suggests that we should drink eight 8-ounce glasses (approximately 2 liters or half a gallon) of water a day. This is a simple guideline that many people use as a baseline for adequate hydration.

Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommendations: The IOM suggests a total daily water intake of about 3.7 liters (or 13 cups) for men and about 2.7 liters (or 9 cups) for women. This total includes all beverages and food moisture.

Listen to your thirst: Thirst is the body's natural way of signaling the need for more fluid. Drinking when you're thirsty is a guideline some health professionals recommend.

Urine color test: Monitoring the color of urine can help gauge hydration status. Pale yellow urine usually indicates proper hydration, while dark yellow or amber-colored urine suggests dehydration. "Did we really go there?" you may be asking. Answer: "Yup. We did. And, we'll be back."

Climate and activity adjustments: In hot climates or during intense exercise, our bodies lose more water through sweat, so increasing water intake during these times is recommended.

Special considerations: Pregnant or breastfeeding women, athletes, and people with certain health conditions may have increased fluid requirements.

Let me give you an example of how these factors came together for me last summer. My coach helped me determine that, based on my height and weight, during the hot summer months, I needed about eleven 8 oz glasses of water per day. When I was out on my road bike for about an hour and a half in the early afternoon, I'd have an additional liter in the bottles on my bike and about 500 mL in the mini-bottles in my jacket and shorts' pockets—and I still wanted more water when I got home.

It is really important to remember that individual hydration needs can vary based on factors like age, gender, weight, activity level, and overall health. I can't say this enough: consulting with a trusted healthcare provider can help determine the most appropriate and hydration strategy for you.

Why proper hydration can be a struggle

People can struggle to drink enough water for several reasons.

Resistance to diet culture: This is part of what I shared earlier. I, personally, resented what felt like a punitive dismissal of my experience as a binge eater. Between the lines of the judgments, I never really heard any authenticity or humanity in the directives to drink more water, and so I almost completely missed its importance.

Lack of awareness: Many people simply aren't aware of the daily recommended water intake or the signs of dehydration.

Busy lifestyle: A hectic schedule can make it hard for people to remember to drink water regularly. Work, school, and other activities can distract from the need to stay hydrated.

Preference for other beverages: Some people prefer flavored or sweetened beverages over water, which can reduce their overall water intake. Listen, my 14-year-old son always wants a pop when we're

out and about—even though, at home, he’s happy to guzzle water, kombucha, my protein smoothies, and juice with sparkling water.

Environmental factors: In cooler climates or during colder seasons, people may feel less thirsty and, as a result, drink less water. Indoor heating can also reduce humidity levels, increasing the need for hydration. This past winter I felt like my entire intestinal lining went dry, like I couldn’t possibly drink enough water—until I remembered that I forgot to up the humidifier attached to the furnace once I’d turned on the winter heating. That was a huge eye-opener for me about the connection between low humidity and hydration.

Physical factors: Certain people, such as the elderly, may have a diminished sense of thirst, leading to less frequent water consumption. And some medical conditions and medications can affect hydration levels too.

Misinterpretation of thirst: People often mistake thirst for hunger, leading them to eat (and not always water-rich foods) when they actually need to drink water.

Accessibility: In some cases, easy access to clean drinking water can be a barrier. This can include times when we’re traveling, and also if we don’t make the clean drinking water that we do have access to readily available for ourselves. For example, not having a bottle of water in the car or in our purse, backpack, or waist pack for when we’re out and about.

Habitual factors: For many people, not drinking enough water is simply a habit, and changing this habit takes conscious effort.

What are you noticing?

Now, let’s turn to what you’re noticing about your water intake. How does your body and mind feel when you’re adequately hydrated versus not?

Have you ever noticed how much better it feels to have really had enough to drink (water, and not all wine!). Just so we’re clear. Like, enough water so that you feel as if every cell is hydrated ... and your pee is pale. Remember I told you, we’d be back here!

Maybe you’ve noticed feeling more alert, dialed in, energized, maybe even a sense of safety or feeling more settled and sated in your body . . . versus feeling fatigued, low energy, sleepy, or restlessness, or getting headaches or looking for distractions, including seeking out food.

Would you like to explore a goal for hydration?

Is there a goal you’d like to set in terms of hydration awareness and its effects on your body and experience?

If so, what is that goal in terms of amount of fluids per day? Remember to factor in your unique needs, including activity level and climate.

Taking easy next steps

What would be some easy next steps you could take this week to begin to implement a strategy to improve hydration?

Here are a few ideas for you to ponder—and remember, just toss any that don't feel right for you.

Enjoy a hot cuppa: A hot cuppa can be nurturing—a hot feel-good. You could incorporate it into a break. But even if a hot drink isn't part of a break, it's still possible to really enjoy a hot drink as you hydrate while doing something else.

Use a water bottle: Carry a reusable water bottle and refill it throughout the day to ensure you always have water on hand. If you're worried about plastic, you can use glass or stainless steel water bottles.

Track your intake: Use a mobile app or a journal to track how much water you drink and to remind you to stay hydrated.

Flavor your water: If you find plain water boring, add natural flavors like lemon, cucumber, mint, or berries to make it more appealing. One of my all-time faves is Real Sips because it doesn't contain artificial sweeteners or flavorings.

Try water-rich foods: Consider incorporating bone broths and fruits and vegetables with high water content, such as watermelon, cucumber, oranges, and tomatoes, into your day.

Establish routines: Link water drinking with daily activities, such as drinking a glass of water after waking up, before each meal, and before bed. Or keeping a glass or bottle of water in rooms where you spend a lot of time.

Set reminders: Use phone alarms or computer reminders to prompt you to drink water at regular intervals.

Monitor your urine color: Yes, we are back to this again! You can use the color of your urine as a guide; aim for pale yellow, which suggests more adequate hydration.

Replace other drinks: Swap out sugary or caffeinated beverages with water during meals and throughout the day.

Remember to explore which of these ideas resonate for you and to see if tweaking them would work better for you.

For example, I know that if I drink a full glass of water before bed, I'll be up in the night using the washroom and may not get back to sleep. So, for me, it works are better to drink more water earlier in the day and maybe only have at most half a glass of water before bed.

Implementing these strategies can help increase water intake and promote better hydration, with all the benefits that come with that.

Addressing challenges

And, lastly, let's turn to obstacles. Do you foresee any challenges to trying to increase your hydration? If so, what are they?

How could you prepare in advance to face these anticipated obstacles?

I just gave an example of a challenge to drinking water before bed and how I address it.

Another one of my objections to drinking more water was how often I needed to use the washroom! I told myself I didn't have time to be interrupted so much!

What helped me was actually tracking the data on my objection. How long did it really take me to go to the bathroom when I drank more water?

This is how I calculated it. I went with the stat that I sleep for about eight hours and am awake for about 16 hours every day.

If every bathroom break was five minutes—which was a generous estimate—and let's say I went once per hour now that I drink enough water, as opposed to once every two hours, we were talking about an additional eight or so trips to the loo. That's an additional 40 minutes.

Now, before you howl, "OMG, are you kidding me?!!! You took another 40 minutes out of your day?" . . . Let's talk.

Yes, maybe it was 40 minutes. But only some of that was actually going pee.

It was also getting up from my nearly 12 hours per day on my laptop.

It was also giving my eyes a break.

It was also moving my body, stretching my fingers, wrists, forearms, and shoulders. It was looking at my favorite plants along the way, their green leaves holding sunlight and dappling their shadows on the wall.

It was also remembering the meaning in the waffled, cream shower curtains I bought to evoke the memory of a stay my son and I had at an Edmonton hotel as we cheered on the Canadian Women's National Basketball team the weekend they qualified for the Tokyo Olympics.

Was it an extra 40 minutes in my day?

Possibly

But it was nearly 40 minutes of glimmers, as Deb Dana would call them, experiences that make you feel safe and connected, which she juxtaposes with triggers, experiences that make you feel anxious or withdrawn.

It was nearly 40 minutes of savoring my body and how it loves to move, of savoring the stunning beauty of greenery, and of savoring memories of the weekend Kia Nurse held my son in her arms at a team dinner.

It was nearly 40 minutes of delight.

Well, there you have it. A few notes on hydration, why it can be a big deal for binge eaters, and an invitation to make your washroom retreats a wonderful thing.

That's it for Episode 79. Thank you for listening and hanging out with me. If you would be so kind, would you please invite someone you think might benefit from hearing this podcast to take a listen? You can grab the link in the show notes on your phone and text or email it to a friend. I would be so thankful, because my passion is to help as many people as possible heal from binge eating so they can live the full life they've dreamed of.

Thanks for listening to *The Done Bingeing Podcast*.

Martha has the highest-level training in both the evidence-based Internal Family Systems approach and in life coaching, and she's available to help you stop bingeing. You can learn more about her programs by going to www.holdingthespace.co and clicking Programs.

Stay tuned for the next episode on freeing yourself from binge eating and creating the life you want.

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