



## Why Water Matters for catering and food service workers



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### Why does water matter for catering and food service workers?

Professional kitchens and food prep areas are hot and busy. Head chefs, catering and hospitality managers should be aware that staff need regular hydration to work at optimal levels. Scientists say that a loss of 1% of body mass due to dehydration can impair performance. Research shows that even a small fall in hydration levels can mean a drop in concentration, which can lead to mistakes, slow service or even accidents in the kitchen.

### What are the dangers of dehydration?

Dehydration can create headaches, lethargy, or just an overall lack of alertness. In the long-term it can cause problems with the renal system and mental functioning as well as with the cardio-vascular system. Concentration lapses that might lead to simple but harmless mistakes in an office can be a more serious risk in a food preparation area. Dehydration can also cause skin irritations due to excessive sweating; heat cramps if 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 and 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 WHA member, who undergoes rigorous annual safety inspections.

### What's best way to provide safe hydration?

Advise colleagues not to wait until they feel thirsty before taking a drink, as by then they may already be dehydrated. Drink frequently, especially during hot weather or if working in a kitchen.

Remember that front-of-house staff, whose jobs are physical, need to hydrate too.

Ensure that if using bottled water coolers, the bottles are stored in a cool, dry, clean place.

### Should we choose a mains-fed or bottled water cooler?

Whether you choose a bottled water cooler or a mains-fed unit will depend on the layout of your kitchen or staff areas.

Bottled water coolers have the advantage that you can move them to convenient locations. You will need to find the space to store bottles and staff must be briefed to change them when needed. This is a good solution if you have no ready access to plumbing where you need the cooler. A mains-fed unit will need to be plumbed in and although it cannot then be relocated easily, there is no issue with bottle storage. For some premises, a mix of the two types is useful.

“ Staff need regular hydration to work at optimal levels. ”



## Not all water coolers are equal

Whichever style of water cooler you choose, make sure of one thing. Choose a supplier that is a member of the Water Dispenser & Hydration Association. Known as the WHA, the Association is the leading trade body ensuring standards of safety and hygiene that are at the top of their class. WHA members must stick to strict Codes of Practice and good conduct and are rigorously audited every year. By dealing with a WHA member you know you are getting the best. Visit <https://twha.co.uk/find-a-member> to check who to do business with.

## The sustainable choice

Bottled water coolers are highly sustainable: bottles are collected, cleansed and reused many times over whilst main-fed coolers of course use water from the mains. In addition, many WHA members follow the '5 for 5 Sustainability Pledge'. For details visit our website.

## Further information

For more information visit [www.twha.co.uk](http://www.twha.co.uk)

## Healthy Hydration Chart

There's one easy way to know if you are properly hydrated – check the colour of your urine against our 'pee chart'. Pale is good; dark urine means you could be in need of fluid. And if you find you are dehydrated, here's an easy way to rehydrate healthily: head straight to that water cooler... simple.

### well hydrated

Your urine is an ideal, pale straw colour. Keep up the good work.

You're okay but you could do with a small glass of water now.

You may be a little dehydrated. Drink a couple of glasses of water now.

You need to drink about up to half litre of water right now.

Not good! You are dehydrated and may have a headache. Drink a litre of water.

### poorly hydrated

Note: if your urine is even darker than this and or red/dark brown then dehydration may not be the problem. Seek medical advice.



WHA  
Water Dispenser &  
Hydration Association

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Choose a WHA member –  
for hydration you can trust  
[www.twha.co.uk](http://www.twha.co.uk)

Disclaimer: the information given here is for guidance only. If in doubt about your health seek attention from a medical professional.