Dear Alice,

I have a weird question: I want to drink my own urine. I know it sounds crazy, but I want to try. What are the harmful effects, if any?

Signed,
Weird, but still curious

Answer

Dear Weird, but still curious,

Weird or not, there are all sorts of people who have taken the plunge into the under-discussed world of tasting and/or drinking urine—one's own and others'—even though most say, "just flush and forget about it." In fact, there's even a growing interest in "urine therapy" based on some very old (and as of yet, very unproven) ideas that drinking urine can help heal the body. Others drink urine for the simple reason that they get off on it, that they are into (almost) every part of their partner's body.

Urine is mostly water, and it is sterile until it reaches the urethra. But this does not mean it qualifies for the recommended 6 - 8 daily glasses of H2O, and here's why: in addition to the water content, urine contains trace elements of hundreds of other things—from undigested alcohol to nitrogen and potassium, and sodium, which makes it such a salty drink. (By the way, the first pee in the morning is more concentrated; and the more water you drink, the more diluted it will be.) Urine could? in rare cases? also have some toxic substances in it, such as lead or arsenic. It can also contain trace amounts of drugs that the urinating person has recently ingested, though probably not enough to actually give the sipper any high or show up on a drug test.

"Water sports" or "golden showers" are sexual behaviors in which someone urinates on his or her partner's skin or body in the shower, in bed, at the beach, etc. This is generally harmless, as long as the pee doesn't get into any orifice or wound. If someone does end up urinating in your mouth (or you drink your own urine), s/he could conceivably transmit an infection. Passing on a urinary tract infection (UTI) could complicate matters. Hepatitis B, chlamydia, and gonorrhea could be present in the urine and could theoretically be transmitted to the drinker, causing infection.

People who have an autoimmune disorder (including HIV/AIDS), kidney problems, high blood
pressure, diabetes, or other major medical problems need to shy away from drinking or swallowing urine because of the possibilities for infection.

Now that all of that has been said, back to your original concern, which was tasting or drinking your own urine. Assuming that you know you're free of infections and any major medical problems, then there aren't many harmful side effects to your health that should concern you.

Alice!

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