



Dehydration

Dehydration is a dangerous, yet preventable, condition that can lead to significant potential health risks. It occurs when a person loses more fluid than they take in and occurs more often in hot summer and fall months.

What does dehydration look like?

Below are some common signs of dehydration:

- Constipation;
- Muscle cramping;
- Confusion or lethargy;
- Decreased urinary output;
- Nausea or vomiting;
- Urine is strong smelling or dark in color;
- Blurred vision;
- Bad breath or tongue may have white coating;
- Dry and cracked lips;
- Skin may tent, and may be crinkly and itchy;
- Eyes may be sunken back in head; and
- Producing few tears if crying.

Stay Cool! Stay Hydrated!



Who can become dehydrated?

EVERYONE!

Anyone can become dehydrated, but some individuals are even more vulnerable, including:

- Individuals who cannot recognize signs of dehydration;
- Older adults and young children;
- Individuals with fever, vomiting, or diarrhea;
- Those on psychotropic medication since it may decrease their ability to sweat;
- Individuals who require assistance to eat or have swallowing difficulties;
- Individuals who don't like drinking fluids, mostly drink fluids with caffeine or alcohol, or have fluid restriction; or
- Those exposed to hot temperatures causing excess sweating.

Caretaker Checklist (CDC)

It's important to keep a close eye on those in your care by visiting them often and asking yourself these questions:

- ✓ Are individuals drinking enough water?
- ✓ Do individuals have access to air conditioning?
- ✓ Do individuals know how to keep cool?
- ✓ Do individuals show any signs of heat stress?



Did you know? You should aim to drink six to eight 8-oz glasses of water each day.



Preventing Dehydration

Encourage healthy fluid intake by reminding individuals to:

- Drink water or other fluids before they are thirsty.
- Take sips between bites during meals.
- Add fluids throughout the day.
- Keep drinks readily available.
- Drink fat-free or low-fat milk, and drinks with no added sugar.
- Limit caffeine, soda drinks, coffee and alcohol.
- Continue drinking fluids even if they have urinary control problems.
- Eat low-fat soup and foods with high fluid content like watermelon, pears, fruit salad, and gelatin desserts.

Specifically help increase water intake by encouraging individuals to:

- Drink a full glass of water before they exercise or go for a walk.
- Have a full glass of water when they take medication.
- Carry a water bottle and refill it often throughout the day.
- Freeze some freezer safe water bottles for ice-cold water all day.
- Serve water at meals and order water when eating out.
- Add a lemon or lime slice or frozen fruit to water to add fun flavors.

Protect against environmental dehydrating factors by helping individuals:

- Wear lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothing when outdoors or in hot environments.
- Pace themselves when doing physical activity or exercise.
- Avoiding the hottest parts of the day when scheduling outdoor activities.
- Bring a shade umbrella to outdoor events.
- Maintain a cool temperature in the home or building where activities take place.

Treatment

- Offer fluids with electrolytes;
- Provide water and assist individuals who are susceptible to choking or aspiration;
- Encourage individuals to eat foods with high fluid content;
- Monitor hydration status regularly and note decreased input or output; and
- Contact the individual's primary care provider to create a care plan to prevent dehydration in the future.

Additional Resources

Getting Enough Fluids:

[Getting Enough Fluids | National Institute on Aging \(nih.gov\)](#)

Water and Healthier Drinks:

[Water and Healthier Drinks | Healthy Weight, Nutrition, and Physical Activity | CDC](#)

Rethink Your Drink:

[Rethink Your Drink | Healthy Weight, Nutrition, and Physical Activity | CDC](#)

Heat and Older Adults:

[Heat Stress in Older Adults | Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | CDC](#)

