



## 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.



Risk Bulletins are produced by the Department of Developmental Services to alert provider agencies, regional center staff, and others to specific risks identified with our community.

## 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](#)

