
Preventing Dehydration In Older Adults

Dehydration is when the body “dries out” because of drinking too little fluid, losing too much fluid, or both. Normal fluid loss happens with breathing, urination, and sweating. Too much fluid can be lost through vomiting, diarrhea, or excessive sweating. Dehydration can occur quickly in older adults and may lead to serious health conditions.

You may be dehydrated if you experience:

- dark colored urine
- frequent urination and only pass a small amount
- dry mouth or coated tongue
- constipation or small and hard stools
- dry skin
- frequent urinary tract infection
- headache
- confusion
- dizziness or lightheadedness after standing up
- fast heart rate
- dry eyes

You may not have all of these symptoms at the same time, but all may be caused by not drinking enough fluids.

What can I do to prevent dehydration?

The best way to replace fluids is to drink enough daily. Many older people do not feel thirsty and are not aware of the need to drink.

- **Men 13 cups/day (3.0L)**
- **Women 9 cups/day (2.7L)**

What should I drink?

At least half of what you drink should be water.

Good choices of fluid are:

- Water or calorie-free flavored water
- Fruit or vegetable juices
- Milk
- Decaffeinated or herbal teas
- Low sodium broth or soups

Poor choices are:

- Canned soups, which can be a hidden source of salt
- Soft drinks and sports drinks high in sugar
- Caffeinated drinks such as coffee, tea, and hot chocolate
- Alcohol

*Caffeinated and alcoholic drinks may cause fluid loss.

*Alcoholic drinks should be limited to two drinks/day for men and one for women. 1 Drink = 12oz beer, 6oz wine, or 1oz liquor

Simple ways to drink more:

- Use large, easy to hold cups
- Leave a glass of fluid at your bedside or sitting area
- Choose a variety of fluids based on what you like
- Drink fluids during and between meals
- Remind older adults to drink enough fluid daily

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