

Dehydration

Information for residents, families and carers



Dehydration occurs when your body loses too much fluid.

This can happen if you don't drink enough, or you are sick and sweat, vomit or have diarrhoea.

Dehydration can be very serious – even life threatening.

Dehydration may also change how medicines act on your body.

As you get older you may not feel as thirsty as you used to, so it is important to drink with your meals and at other times during the day.

Signs you may be dehydrated

- You don't pass urine as often as usual.
- Your urine is dark and has a strong smell.
- You drink less than usual.
- Your mouth is dry and sticky.
- Your skin is dry.
- You have cramps.
- You have headaches or feel dizzy.
- You can't think clearly.
- You feel short tempered.
- You feel tired and washed out.

Ways to prevent dehydration

- Try to drink more. Water is best.
- Most people need at least six to eight cups each day.
- Watery foods like soup, yoghurt, jelly and ice-cream are counted as drinks.
- Take small sips of your drinks more often.
- Have the drinks that you like where you can reach them.
- Drink more on hot days.
- Get staff or your family to help you drink if you need it.

- If you have an illness that limits the amount you can drink, ask staff or your doctor how many drinks you should have each day.

Ways to manage dehydration

The best way to treat dehydration is to drink more.

If you are too sick to drink, you may need fluid through a drip (subcutaneously or intravenously).

Working together

You and your family are important members of the care team. You know what is normal for you.

Let staff know if you notice any changes or feel unwell. Tell them if you are passing less urine than normal or you have any other signs of dehydration. Don't wait to see if you get better – it's always best to get help early.

Working together with staff will help keep you healthy and out of hospital. Talk to staff and ask questions. They need your help to give you the best care.

Questions to ask staff

- How much do I need to drink each day?
- Could my medicines be making me dehydrated?



Want to know more?

'Water – a vital nutrient' fact sheet <www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>

Disclaimer: This health information is for general purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

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