

Getting enough fluids at home

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Having enough to drink is really important

Medical evidence shows that being hydrated has a significant impact on preventing or helping to treat conditions such as:

- pressure ulcers (bed sores)
- constipation
- blood clots
- kidney and gallstones
- heart disease
- low blood pressure
- management of diabetes
- poor oral health
- dizziness and confusion leading to falls
- confusion/memory loss
- urinary infections and incontinence - adequate fluids may reduce feelings of urgency



For these reasons, it is really important that you or your relative/friend drink enough fluids at home.

How much fluid do we need each day?

At least 1.2 litres/day (about 8 cups or 6 glasses or mugs). Avoid drinks containing caffeine or alcohol. Alcohol increases the risk of dehydration.



Who is at risk of dehydration?

People who:

- are dependent on others for provision/ access to fluids
- have swallowing problems
- have an increased temperature or are sweating
- have diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- have taken part in strenuous physical activities

Spotting the signs and symptoms

Are you or your loved one:

- eating/drinking less than usual?
- producing small amounts of urine? Is it dark in colour or strong smelling?
- feeling tired regularly?
- confused?
- constipated?
- prone to infections?
- always thirsty?

Do you or your loved one have a dry mouth, lips or eyes?



What you can do to improve hydration

- Know the signs and symptoms so you can identify dehydration and take action.
- Aim for 8 drinks/day - for example after each meal and at snack time.
- Aim to have a glass of water with medication.
- Try to have more milky drinks. These are very important if you or your loved one is losing weight and/or have a poor appetite.
- Have foods which have a high fluid content - for example soups, jellies, mousses, ice cream, lollies, fruit.
- If you are a carer, sit down and have a drink with the person and encourage other friends and relatives to do the same.
- Plan visits/observe mealtimes to get a sense of what the person is drinking and if they have any problems drinking.



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