

What you need to know about . . .

Dehydration

Dehydration is a condition where the body does not have enough fluid (water) to work properly. Dehydration can happen very quickly or very slowly. Severe dehydration is a life-threatening condition.

These conditions and events cause a person to be more at risk for dehydration:

- Not being able to tell someone you're thirsty;
- Strenuous physical activity;
- Exposure to hot weather;
- Diabetes;
- Kidney disease;
- Use of some medications, such as diuretics (water pills);
- Needing assistance with getting and drinking drinks;
- Refusing to eat or drink or not eating and drinking enough – sometimes related to mental health issues such as paranoia;
- Excessive drooling or fluid falling from mouth when drinking;
- Illness that causes a person to lose fluids through diarrhea or vomiting.

Know the risks

Know the signs

These are signs that a person may be dehydrated:

- Urinating (peeing) less;
- Urine that is dark yellow or brown, possibly with a strong odor;
- Dry mouth;
- Cracked lips;
- Dry skin;
- Extreme thirst;
- Dizziness or lightheadedness;
- Feeling tired or having a hard time waking up;
- Weight loss;
- Altered vital signs (like running a fever, rapid pulse, etc.);
- Pale skin;
- Weakness;
- Skin that lacks elasticity (when you gently pull a fold of skin at the wrist, it takes a while to return to its original position).

Know what to do

What to do to prevent dehydration:

- Encourage persons supported who can safely do so to drink plenty of fluids.
- Where recommended, document fluid intake and/or output.
- For persons unable or unwilling to drink, offer foods with high fluid content, such as watermelon, pudding, or Jell-O.
- Avoid exposure to high heat and humidity;
- Catch it early. Recognize signs of dehydration and notify the nurse.

IN AN EMERGENCY:

Severe dehydration can lead to shock.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if the person:

- becomes extremely lightheaded;
- loses consciousness (becomes unresponsive);
- has gray or pale skin or blue lips;
- is confused or has a sudden change in behavior.



State of Georgia
Department of Behavioral Health
and Developmental Disabilities