

What you need to know about . . .

Dehydration

- **Dehydration** is a condition in which 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 he/she is 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, which can be 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 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
- Change in vital signs (like running a fever, rapid pulse, etc.)
- Pale skin
- Weakness
- Skin that lacks elasticity (ex. when pulled gently at the wrist, it takes a while to return to its original position)

Know what to do

What to do to prevent dehydration:

- Encourage the person to drink plenty of fluids if he/she can do so safely.
 - Where recommended, document fluid intake and/or output
 - For people unable or unwilling to drink, offer foods with high fluid content, such as watermelon, pudding, or jello
 - 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.

