

# Dehydration

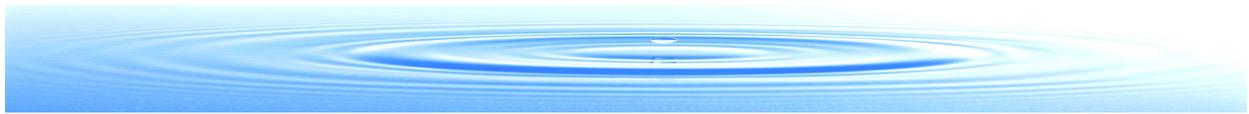
As the warm summer months approach, we might start to dream about days soon spent at the beach, swimming, or even watering our lawn to stay green and lush.

But, remember too, water is an essential nutrient – over half our body is made of water. Without it we would not survive!

Dehydration occurs when you lose more fluid than you take in. Anyone can become dehydrated but older adults and people with chronic illnesses are at a much higher risk.

While dehydration is usually associated with the summer months, it can also occur in the winter months too. Having the heat in your home turned up high, or anytime you are not drinking enough fluids can increase your risk for dehydration.

## **Water and Hydration for Older Adults**



**Water is an essential nutrient** - it doesn't provide any calories, protein or vitamins, but without it you would not survive. Over half of your body is made of water!

### Some of the roles of water:

- moves nutrients and medications through the body
- reduces constipation
- protects joints and organs from injury
- keeps skin moist and younger looking
- cools the body in the summer and warms it in the winter



### How much water should you drink every day?

A general recommendation is to drink 6-8 cups of water per day. However, you may need a little more, or less, depending on your body size, activity level, and the climate.

### Common Signs of Dehydration include:

- Dry mouth, flushed skin, fatigue, or headache
- Increased body temperature, rapid breathing or elevated pulse rate
- Confusion, dizziness, weakness, or impaired breathing with activity
- Dark colored urine (the color of apple juice)

## Tips for Increasing Water Intake:

- Drink an entire glass of water at regular times during the day, such as when you eat a meal or take your medicine.
- Place a glass of water beside your favorite chair for a “water break” while you’re watching TV or reading.
- Drink tap water
  - Tap water is more regulated than bottled water, and it usually has fluoride added to keep your teeth strong.

## Barriers to drinking enough water:

Research shows that one of the biggest barriers to drinking enough fluids is the fear of incontinence. Below are some tips to help you drink enough when incontinence might be an issue:

- Tailor your water intake to the time of day and proximity to a bathroom.
- Drink more frequently during the day when you can easily access the bathroom at home, and less during the few hours before you go to sleep.
- If you are running errands in the afternoon, drink more water early in the morning so you have time to use the bathroom at home before you go out in the afternoon.
- Your doctor can also discuss other solutions with you if needed.

## If you don’t like plain water, try:

- Filtered tap water
- Adding lemon, cucumber slices, or mint leaves
- Adding a handful of frozen berries
- Adding splash of juice
- Using sugar-free flavoring packets, such as Crystal Light



## What about other beverages?

Other drinks such as milk and the liquid from soups and foods also contribute to your overall daily fluid intake.

- Beverages like iced tea, juice or soda are okay, occasionally, but they often provide excess calories.
- Caffeinated drinks like coffee, tea or soda may act as a mild diuretic.

