

What can I do to help?

Prevention is better than cure.



- Adults need at least 6 glasses of water a day
- Your relative may not ask for help, or may be too ill to ask, so offer to help them drink.
- If they cannot drink large amounts, encourage them to drink in small sips.
- Try using a larger cup, people usually drink more when the fluid is offered from a large cup than from a small one.
- Tempt them with juices and flavours they like
- Make sure it is not too chilled or too warm, as this often decreases the amount they will take.

Dying of thirst?



Information about dehydration
for
Relatives and friends

What is dehydration?

Dehydration is a deficiency of water in the body.

It occurs when a person's fluid intake is too low and when fluid is lost in large amounts, for example in vomiting and diarrhoea and in medical conditions such as Diabetes which increases urine output and can lead to dehydration.

Why older people are more at risk of dehydration:

Older people are more at risk of becoming dehydrated and there are times when an older person may need extra fluid above their normal daily requirements to help them overcome an infection, or during periods of hot dry weather.

Usually, dehydration stimulates our brain centres to feel thirsty and makes us drink more water. Older people are particularly at risk of becoming dehydrated because the thirst centre in their brains does not work as well as in a younger person, and so the older person may not be aware that they are becoming dehydrated.

Many older people may also limit the amount they drink to avoid making frequent trips to the loo- particularly if they have painful creaky joints and if they are afraid of falling.

Dehydration increases the risk of falling

Dehydration causes the blood pressure to fall quickly, when standing up from a sitting position and in the first few steps of walking. In an older person this is often enough for them to go off balance and fall.

Why does this happen?

To overcome dehydration the body reduces sweating and reduces the amount of urine produced, and water moves from the body tissues into the blood stream.

Dehydration causes the salt levels in the body to alter. Although the body tries to compensate, sometimes the salt levels in the blood stream become too low so the body stops moving water from the tissues into the blood stream and the person's blood pressure can fall.

How do I spot dehydration?

Spot dehydration with the following symptoms:

- Dry mouth
- Reduced urine output and darker coloured urine
- Sagging skin-

AND DELIRIUM (acute confusion)

Sudden confusion is one of the best indicators that dehydration has become more severe. If the dehydration is left untreated, the body can go into shock and damage the internal organs e.g. the liver, kidneys and brain.