

Dehydration (in Adults) and How to Prevent It

What is dehydration?

Dehydration is not having enough water in your body. You need water to breathe, sweat, pass urine and stool and stay healthy.

When you do not have enough water, you are at higher risk for problems such as:

- kidney stones
- low blood pressure
- heat exhaustion
- urinary tract infections
- kidney failure
- constipation
- salivary gland function problems

What causes dehydration?

There are many causes for dehydration. Some of these are:

- changes from aging such as less desire to drink or having poor taste buds
- drinking too much caffeine or alcohol
- exercising
- being outside in hot weather
- fever, infection, vomiting, diarrhea
- not being able or allowed to have fluids because of medical problems
- taking medications such as water pills and some heart medications
- overusing laxatives

What are the signs dehydration?

There are many signs of dehydration. Some are:

- feeling light-headed
- headaches
- feeling very tired
- muscle cramps
- dry mouth, lips, nose, sunken eyes
- dark urine with a strong smell
- reduced urine output
- falling
- feeling confused

Ways to prevent dehydration . . .

- Follow a healthy diet. If you would like some help with your diet or have a medical problem, talk to your doctor or a dietitian.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day to maintain your fluid balance. If you have heart or kidney disease, talk to your doctor or a dietitian to see how much you can drink.
- Check the colour of your urine. When your urine is dark or strong smelling you may need more fluids.
- If you have diarrhea, vomiting or a fever, drink more fluids.
- Avoid excess alcohol and drinks with caffeine such as coffee, tea, chocolate milk and some soft drinks. These cause you to lose more fluid.
- Drink before, during and after exercise or increased activity.
- Avoid salty foods after exercise.
- Find a cool place when the weather is hot.

When you are outside in the heat . . .

- Drink water before you leave home and bring water with you.
- Wear cool clothing and a hat.
- Avoid being in direct sun.
- Avoid exercising too much when it is hot.
- Take breaks and drink often.
- Take a cool shower when you return home and drink more water.

Remember . . .

If you have heart or kidney disease, talk to your doctor or a dietitian about how much you can drink.

