

# DEHYDRATION

Dehydration occurs when your body does not have enough fluid (water) to work properly. This can cause major problems. These can develop slowly or very quickly. Severe dehydration is a life-threatening condition.



## SOME FACTS about Dehydration

- Dehydration occurs when someone does not take in enough water. This can be due to such things as vomiting, diarrhea, strenuous exercise and illness. When someone is ill, it is important to carefully monitor that they are drinking enough water. Always call the doctor or nurse if you think that someone might be getting dehydrated. Don't wait for all the signs to show up. It might be too late.
- Most problems can be avoided if you recognize and treat dehydration early. However, if it is not treated promptly, it can result in seizures, brain damage, shock or even death.



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Urinate (pee) less
- Urine is dark yellow/brown and may smell bad
- Skin changes:
  - dry/hot or cold/clammy
  - reddish or yellowish in color
- Cracked lips
- Dry mouth
- Sunken or dry eyes (no tears)
- Dizzy and lightheaded – may fall down
- Weak, not interested in doing anything
- Sleepy and tired – hard to wake up
- Weight loss



## PREVENTION

- **Drink Water.** Drink plenty of water or other liquids that do not contain caffeine. This is especially important when not feeling well. Offer at least 8 (8 oz.) glasses a day, more if feeling ill or the weather is very hot. Also, remember to give extra liquids to people who have feeding tubes after checking with physician.
- **Avoid Alcohol & Caffeine.** Drinks that include alcohol and caffeine (coffee, many sodas such as Coke & Pepsi) cause dehydration more quickly. Drink water or juice instead.
- **Reduce Physical Activity.** When its very hot outside, cut back on activities and stay in the shade. Sweating can cause dehydration more quickly.
- **Avoid exposure to extreme heat and/or humidity.** Limit or eliminate outside activities, including trips in extreme weather conditions, especially if you are medically complex. (e.g. avoid trips in car/vans/places with no air conditioning)
- **Catch it Early.** Look for signs of dehydration and act before it worsens.
- If you suspect a person is becoming **dehydrated**, give them **water** to sip right away.



## CAUSES

- **Illness**, especially with vomiting (throwing up), diarrhea or nausea
- **Not wanting to drink** water or other liquids
- Certain medical conditions such as **Diabetes**
- Strenuous **physical activity** that results in a lot of sweating
- Very **hot weather** or being out in the sun too long
- Certain **medications** (watch carefully for dehydration if taking lithium or "water pills" for blood pressure)



## WHAT TO DO

- **Increase Fluids.** Give water or other clear liquids (avoid drinks with caffeine). Sip slowly – do this frequently.
- **Rest.** Avoid physical activity. The person should lie down in a cool area.
- **Monitor Signs.** Write down when the person goes to the bathroom (how often - measure amount of urine if possible). Call the doctor if the person is becoming less alert, is fainting, or has stopped going to the bathroom.



## WHAT NOT TO DO

- **DO NOT** stay in the sun – seek a cool shaded area.
- **DO NOT** turn up the heat or dress the person in extra heavy clothing.
- **DO NOT** force the person to do physical activities.
- **DO NOT** give salt pills.



## DOCUMENT

- Keep a running log about how much the person drinks and how often they go to the bathroom (urinate) if the individual is at risk of dehydration.
- File an Incident Report (if required) and complete other documentation such as writing down a description in the logbook (or notebook depending upon where you live) if the person requires emergency medical care.



## CALL THE DOCTOR

Call the doctor or nurse if you see any of these signs of dehydration:

- **Sunken eyes**
- **No tears**
- **Little or no urine** for the last 8 hrs
- Become **less alert** or very tired
- Become **weak** or sleepy
- **Yellow or reddish skin** color
- **Throwing up** for more than 12 hours
- **Diarrhea** for more than 24 hours
- Unexpected **seizure**
- **Elevated temperature (fever)**



## EMERGENCY

Severe dehydration can lead to **SHOCK** and must be treated as an **EMERGENCY**. Get to a hospital or call 911 if you see:

- **Confusion** or sudden behavior change
- **Fainting** or extreme lightheadedness
- **Loss of consciousness** – can't wake up
- Shallow, **rapid breathing**
- **Moist, cool skin OR Dry, hot skin**
- **Gray or pale skin or blue lips**
- **New onset or prolonged seizure**



## TO LEARN MORE - Go to these websites:

- <http://www.health.allrefer.com/health/dehydration-causes.html>
- [http://www.my.webmd.com/hw/health\\_guide\\_atoz/hw86827.asp](http://www.my.webmd.com/hw/health_guide_atoz/hw86827.asp)