

# Hydration for Seniors



**Dehydration** is ranked in the top ten most frequent reasons for Medicare hospitalizations. The average cost of this is nearly three thousand dollars. Half of all patients hospitalized with dehydration as the primary diagnosis, die within one year.

## What does hydration mean?

The hydration status of a person refers to their body water balance. Dehydration occurs when people don't have enough fluid in their bodies. Many older people have problems with dehydration. Dehydration is a serious problem and can result in death if it is not taken care of, but dehydration is very easy to prevent.

## Physical Changes that Affect Hydration

The ability to feel thirst lessens with age so seniors may not realize when they need to drink more. Seniors may find they have to use the bathroom more often so they are losing more fluid. In the aging process, people's bodies start losing muscle and gaining fat. Muscle holds water but fat does not, so as a person ages their body water decreases. Medications that increase urination or help constipation can also cause dehydration.

## Tips for Staying Hydrated

- Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink; by this time you are already dehydrated.
- Carry a water bottle with you and drink from it regularly.
- Drink at least eight cups of water everyday.
- Keep a full water bottle in the refrigerator door and take a drink every time you open the refrigerator.
- Drink extra in extreme heat to replace the water lost from sweating.
- Start and end the day with a cup of water.
- Do not replace water with alcohol or caffeinated drinks.
- Know the symptoms of dehydration

## Symptoms of Dehydration

First symptoms: drink water

- Thirst
- Dry mouth
- Dark yellow urine
- Fatigue
- Irritability

Life threatening symptoms: go to the ER or contact your physician right away

- Dizziness
- Feeling of blacking out when sitting up or standing
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness or cramps
- Sunken eyes
- Low blood pressure
- Increased heart rate

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