



Dehydration

Are You Getting Enough to Drink?

Older adults are at a higher risk of becoming dehydrated than younger adults. As we get older, our body's ability to regulate temperature decreases and it dehydrates at a faster rate. Our sense of thirst also decreases as we age, and becomes a less reliable indicator that we need something to drink.

Being well hydrated helps with:

- Skin integrity
- Wound healing
- Kidney function
- Urinary tract health
- Bowel regularity
- Digestion and absorption
- Circulation and body temperature regulation
- Alertness and concentration

Dehydration may occur if we do not consume enough fluids each day. Our bodies lose water by sweating, breathing, getting rid of waste and ordinary daily activity. If our fluid intake is consistently less than our body's requirements, serious side effects may occur.



You can become dehydrated even before signs appear. Therefore, it is important to drink fluids regularly, even before you feel thirsty.

Signs & symptoms of dehydration:

- Thirst
- Dark urine, decreased urination
- Loss of appetite, weight loss
- Constipation
- Dry mouth, dry lips
- Dry skin
- Headache, dizziness, fainting, nausea
- Confusion
- Irritability
- Fatigue or weakness
- Dry or sunken eyes
- Chills
- Restlessness & sleeplessness
- Cramping
- Weak, rapid pulse
- Low blood pressure
- Skin breakdown
- Poor wound healing

Forever...
in motion™
Physical Activity - do it for life!

Dehydration & Falls

Malnutrition and dehydration have been identified as factors which can increase the risk of falling. Dehydration increases dizziness and confusion, which can lead to loss of balance. The risk of a person falling also increases with age.

Adequate hydration for older adults may help to prevent falls and contribute to a better quality of life.



How much fluid should I drink?

How much fluid you need every day depends on your age, gender and activity level. Hot and humid weather can also increase your needs. Most people should aim to consume 6 to 10 cups (1500 to 2500 ml) of fluid every day.

Drink water before, during, and after engaging in physical activity, especially sports activities that last longer than one hour.

- Fluids should accompany every meal and snack, as well as be available between meal and snack times.
- Keep water visible and close at hand to sip on throughout the day, and encourage others to drink water as you stop to visit.
- All beverages count as fluids, as well as well water from many foods (e.g. yogurt, soup, jello, vegetables and fruit).

Drink plenty of fluids—Your body will thank you!



References

1. Dietitians of Canada. (2012). *Guidelines for Staying Hydrated*. Retrieved August 27, 2012 from <http://www.dietitians.ca/Nutrition-Resources-A-Z/Factsheets/Miscellaneous/Why-is-water-so-important-for-my-body---Know-when-.aspx>
2. Ettinger, W., Mitchell, B. & Blair, S. (2006). *Fitness After 50*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics
3. McLennan, N. & Jobe, J. (2012). *Dehydration—Are You Getting Enough To Drink?* Saskatoon, SK.
4. Wright, V. (2009). *Fitness After 40*. New York, NY: American Management Association.