

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SENIORS AND DEHYDRATION



From the Desk of Jaime Goddard-Stern, BSN

August is the hottest month of the year and it is more important than ever to stay properly hydrated. Everyone should aim for 8 glasses of water daily, however, this can be quite difficult to achieve in someone with dementia. There are a few things you can try to encourage your loved one to drink more fluids. If your loved one does not like plain water, try adding a low sugar flavoring, carbonated water or even try diluted fruit juice. But steer clear of alcoholic beverages or those with too much caffeine that can lead to dehydration. Also, encourage your loved ones to drink even if they are not thirsty. Keep fluids visible and provide reminders throughout the day for them to drink. By the time we are thirsty, we may be dehydrated.

Seniors are more susceptible to dehydration

Seniors are more at risk for dehydration (and electrolyte imbalance) because their bodies do not hold water as well as they did in their youth. Some medications common to seniors may also increase the risk of dehydration.

Increased confusion and/or a change in usual behavior are the first signs that someone with dementia may be dehydrated.

Several families here at Jaime's have expressed concerns that their loved one is not drinking enough fluids and they simply do not understand why they will not drink. I explain to them that their brains are no

longer able to communicate the fact that they are thirsty. Also, they may not be able to express verbally that they are thirsty. It is up to the caregivers to be proactive and think outside of the box when it comes to keeping their loved one hydrated.

Signs of Dehydration

- Muscle cramping
- Dry/white tongue
- Lethargy
- Constipation
- Dark urine
- Excessive time with no urination
- Low blood pressure
- Weak pulse
- Increased confusion (UTI)

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Treating Dehydration

If your loved one is exhibiting signs of possible dehydration, the fluids and electrolytes must be replaced. This can take up to a full hour. Water and a beverage with electrolytes, such as Gatorade, should be given immediately.

*Dehydration can cause complications and may require a trip to the Emergency Room. More severe symptoms include dizziness and rapid heartbeat. But let's avoid that and just make sure to drink plenty and always carry water everywhere you go!

Creative Ways to Keep Your Loved One Hydrated

Be proactive and creative when it comes to getting your loved one to drink more fluids by sneaking in fun and tasty liquids into the day's activities. Some tasty ideas include:

- Popsicles
- Ice cream
- Hot chocolate
- Broth-based soups
- Applesauce
- Jell-O
- Fruits and vegetables

With the summer heat in Florida, ensure your loved ones are taking in liquids periodically during the day to stay hydrated!

*Source: WebMD



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