



Health and Welfare Alert

Dehydration #34-03-23

As a supporter of a person with a developmental disability, you play a big role in promoting health and wellness. Getting enough fluids every day is important for good health. While each person is different in their needs, the National Academy of Medicine suggests that healthy women and men should consume 91 to 125 total ounces of fluids, respectively, per day.

When our bodies do not have enough fluids, especially for extended periods, there can be serious effects. Dehydration occurs when the body loses more fluid than it produces. The body naturally loses fluids by sweating, vomiting, urinating, diarrhea, etc. Without enough fluids, the body cannot function properly.

Why are people with IDD prone to dehydration?

- They may have difficulty communicating that they are thirsty.
- People may have difficulty swallowing and refuse to eat or drink.
- They may be unable to get a drink on their own when they need one.
- Might be taking medications like antidepressants, high blood pressure medications, antihistamines, diuretics, antipsychotics, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications, which may be dehydrating.
- People with disabilities may not be encouraged to drink fluids or may limit their own drinks for fear that they will be incontinent.



Dehydration can cause many serious health problems, including:

- Decreased cognitive ability
- Increased seizure activity
- Constipation
- Urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Kidney stones
- Bladder inflammation
- Kidney failure
- In severe cases, coma and death

Fast Facts

- Dehydration is considered one of the Fatal 5 leading causes of death for people with IDD.
- When a person feels thirsty, they are already dehydrated.
- In 2021, 60 Ohioans with IDD were hospitalized due to dehydration, which is often preventable.
- Dehydration is a leading risk factors for urinary tract infections (UTIs) which can be serious and lead to other infections or even death.
- In 2021, 40 people died of infections including UTIs, urosepsis, and sepsis.



Signs of Dehydration

- Feeling thirsty
- Dry mouth, tongue, or skin
- Rapid heartbeat or breathing
- Decreased urine output or dark, concentrated urine
- Confusion or disorientation
- Muscle cramps
- Unusual feelings of fatigue
- Constipation
- Headache
- Tiredness or lethargy
- Irritability
- Dizziness or fainting

What can you do to help promote healthy hydration?

- Tie it into a routine. Encourage people to drink a glass of water every time they return from work, brush their teeth, eat a meal or use the bathroom.
- Be a good role model.
- Track how much water the person is drinking by putting it on paper, a calendar, computer, phone, or wearable device. Use individualized documentation for monitoring input if a person has one.
- Have a challenge with each other. Make it fun.
- Be creative. Get a fun water bottle, using sugar-free water enhancers.

Urine Color

OVER HYDRATED

GOOD

FAIR

LIGHT DEHYDRATED

VERY DEHYDRATED

SEVERE DEHYDRATED