

Age and poor hydration

- Many older people do not drink adequate amounts of fluid. About 80% of our water comes from drinks and 20% is contained in our food. A reduced appetite or poor nutrition can mean that many older people may miss out on vital fluids resulting in dehydration.
- Our kidneys regulate the amount of fluid in the body but as we get older their function deteriorates. Changes in hormone levels can also mean that water balance takes longer to be restored even after a drink has been consumed.

Practical Tips for Staff and Carers

- Many people prefer to drink little and often.
- Offer water, squash or juice at mealtimes and at least hourly during the day.
- Many people tend to drink all the water in their glass when swallowing tablets. Offering larger volumes at this time encourages people to drink more.
- People may worry about toilet visits at night, so encourage fluid consumption earlier in the day.
- Older people and those who are unwell can lose their thirst and taste. Never take it for granted that they will know when they need to drink.
- Use a hydration chart for patients who do not need a fluid balance chart but you want to ensure that they are drinking enough.

Urine Chart

Compare the colour of your urine to the chart below to find out if you are properly hydrated.

*Healthy pee is 1 to 3,
4 to 8 you must hydrate!*



*Adapted from a leaflet produced by
NHS Worcestershire*

KEEPING HYDRATED

*Staying hydrated is important
for our health and wellbeing*



Water is a basic nutrient of the human body and is critical to human life. (WHO). Although essential to health, along with other nutrient like carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, proteins and minerals, water is often overlooked.

Hydration

Good hydration can assist in preventing or treating ailments such as:

- Memory or thinking problems
- Management of Diabetes
- Constipation
- Dizziness and confusion leading to falls
- Heart Disease
- Poor oral health
- Kidney stones
- Pressure Ulcers/skin conditions
- Low blood pressure
- Urinary infections and incontinence

Dehydration

Thirst is the body's natural response to dehydration, however this is far less effective in older people, and people who have had a stroke or are suffering from Alzheimer's disease, who can be particularly insensitive to thirst.

Many people need to be reminded to drink more fluids to maintain healthy hydration levels – are you drinking enough fluid?

Using a simple check list of how many drinks you have in a day and how many times you go to the toilet will tell you or your carers if you need to take more drinks. Dehydration occurs when the body loses water faster than it can be replenished.

A simple method to track your body's hydration levels is by monitoring your urine, the colour of your urine can reflect how much water your body needs. Use the pee chart overleaf to score your urine 1-8 to see if you need to drink more.

Dehydration can occur as a result of:

- Not drinking enough fluid, such as water, squash or juice
- Memory or thinking problems
- Changes in functional ability
- Excessive exposure to heat or exercise
- Medication such as laxatives, diuretics or hypnotics
- Illness such as diarrhoea and/or vomiting and other infections

Common signs of dehydration are:

- Skin that has less elasticity than normal can be a sign of dehydration
- Not passing urine

- Urine that has an odour
- Decreased ability to carry out physical tasks, loss of appetite, reduction in urinary output, sleepiness, headaches, impatience and lack of concentration as well as more serious symptoms in the case of severe dehydration
- Urine being dark in colour: healthy, hydrated urine is pale lemon or straw coloured

Top 10 Hydrating Foods

On average 20% of our water intake is from food. These foods all have a high water content so are good options for helping to increase hydration.

