

# Dehydration and Dementia

Drinking enough water is important for health. Sometimes the mental and physical changes from dementia can make this difficult.

## Why Can Dementia Make Hydration More Difficult?

- Memory loss can cause someone to forget to drink enough fluid
- They may not feel thirsty
- Poor judgment can cause them to overdress and overheat
- They may be weak or unable to use a cup

## Signs of Dehydration:

The person with dementia might not be able to express thirst or understand why they don't feel well. They need you to notice:

- Low urine output
- Concentrated, yellow urine
- Dry mouth
- Cracked lips
- Dizziness
- Constipation
- Very tired
- Increased confusion
- Rapid heartbeat



## What Is Dehydration and How Can You Help?

### Case study:

Mary was acting strange. She was dizzy and tired. She seemed to be breathing rapidly. She was having more difficulty than ever remembering things. Her caregiver noticed all these changes and was concerned. After a complete assessment, the decision was to encourage and monitor Mary's fluid intake. She was dehydrated.

**Definition:** Dehydration is a condition where more fluid is leaving the body than is coming in. The body is over **50%** water; water is very important for keeping cells, tissues and organs in good condition.

### It's Not Just Water - other sources of fluids include:

- Juice
- Milk
- Decaf tea/coffee, herbal tea
- Fruit drinks
- Soup (low sodium broth)
- Popsicles
- Ice cream
- Yogurt, pudding
- Jell-O
- Soda water



Most fruits and vegetables have high water content - include them in the diet every day.

### Tips for Gently Pushing Fluids:

- Offer fluids often throughout the day, not just with meals and medications
- Sit and have a drink or meal with them
- Keep fluids easy to find or reach
- Try different kinds of cups or water bottles including noney cups (cups with an area cut out for the nose)
- Encourage/offer/gently remind to take a drink
- Provide beverages that are well liked – think about what temperature they most enjoy e.g. warm, cool but no ice
- For variation, include solid or semisolid foods with high water content