

# Fact Sheet



Division of Developmental Disabilities Health Care Services

## Dehydration

### Health Information Fact Sheet #1

*Dehydration* means the body does not have as much water and fluids as it should. Dehydration occurs when the amount of fluid leaving the body is greater than the amount going back into the body.

*Fact Sheet guidelines have been provided as general information, not as a substitution for medical treatment from a physician.*



#### Some Facts about Dehydration:

- Approximately 60% of total body weight is water based.
- By the time a member is thirsty, the body has already started the process of dehydration.
- For members with developmental disabilities and older individuals, the need to drink fluids may go unrecognized.

#### Risk Factors (Causes):

*Recognition of the following conditions will help alert you to potential risks:*

- Needing assistance with drinking
- Unable to get drinks without help
- Unable to communicate thirst to someone
- Refusing food and fluid
- Members who may drool or have fluid falling from their mouth
- Any loss of body fluid: vomit, sweat, diarrhea
- Medications such as diuretics that cause loss of fluid
- Medical conditions such as kidney disease where fluid loss can possibly cause dehydration

#### What to Watch For:

- Dry skin
- Dry mouth
- Extreme thirst
- Weakness
- Light headed
- Decreased urine
- Dark colored urine
- Feeling tired or less alert
- Increase in smell of urine due to concentration

#### What to Do:

- *Notify doctor* to the possibility of dehydration
- *Ask how much fluid* the member should have each day
- *Frequently offer fluids* to members who have the ability to drink safely
- *If refusing fluids and able to drink*, offer food items high in fluid content such as gelatin, watermelon, pudding, yogurt or ice cream
- Certain members with heart or kidney disease may need less fluid -- speak with their doctor for specific fluid intake requirements

#### Emergency

- If the member is unable to take fluids safely, has extreme thirst, confusion, little or no urine output; notify the doctor immediately!

The Dehydration Fact Sheet is #1 in a series of Health Information Fact Sheets compiled by DDD Health Care Services.

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