

# DEHYDRATION

## *Fluid Balance Is A Health Issue Among Seniors*

During the typical day, we take in water through the fluids we drink and the foods we eat. Over the same course of time, we also expel water through urine and stool, perspiration, and the breathing process. When the quantity of water we take in is less than the quantity of water we expel, we become dehydrated.

A drop in the body's water level can be very dangerous. It reduces a person's ability to function on both a physical and mental level. When not reversed, dehydration progresses from the mild to the moderate and severe stages. This can result in hospitalization or even death.

Water loss is often associated with hot weather and overexertion. However, there are other factors that can also reduce fluids in the body. (See list below.) Many of these other factors occur more frequently as we age, making dehydration a common health issue among seniors.



*Drinking caffeinated coffee, tea and soda does not help avoid dehydration. Caffeine acts as a mild diuretic, increasing water loss. The same is true for alcohol.*

## SYMPTOMS

Here are symptoms that may be apparent with people who are suffering from mild dehydration. These red flags may also be symptoms for other physical or mental problems. So please consult your doctor for a proper diagnosis and guidance.

- ◆ Dry nasal passages and dry, cracked lips.
- ◆ Dark-colored urine in small quantities.
- ◆ A face that is flushed.
- ◆ Feeling very thirsty.
- ◆ Headaches.
- ◆ Leg and arm cramps.
- ◆ Disorientation, dizziness or hallucinations.
- ◆ Mood changes.
- ◆ Forgetfulness and slowed responses.
- ◆ Feeling tired and general weakness.
- ◆ Nausea.
- ◆ Few or no tears shed when crying.

## CAUSES OF WATER LOSS

Dehydration can be the result of not enough water taken into the body, too much expelled from the body or a combination of both. Here are some common causes of dehydration.

- ◆ Diminished sense of thirst, which is common among seniors.
- ◆ Restricted access to water. May be due to a lack of mobility or being bedridden.
- ◆ Acute illnesses, including an upset stomach (vomiting), diarrhea, fever, pneumonia, the common cold and the flu.
- ◆ Chronic illnesses, including kidney disease, bladder problems, pancreatitis, cirrhosis of the liver, hormone deficiency or diabetes.
- ◆ Medications. Diuretics increase urination. Side effects of some medications include vomiting and diarrhea.
- ◆ Increased perspiration due to a hot and/or humid climate (outdoors or indoors), illness or physical exertion.



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