

Beat the Dehydration Blues

THE SOLUTION

- ▶ Encourage your loved one to drink enough water or other clear fluids—six to eight medium-sized glasses each day.
- ▶ Offer a variety of liquids to spark an interest in drinking. Some good examples are ice water, juice, fruit smoothies, lemonade, and popsicles. Foods that contain water, such as soup, flavored gelatin, watermelon, salads, and yogurt, also work well.
- ▶ Steer away from caffeinated coffee, tea and soda because they trigger fluids to leave the body. However, decaffeinated coffee and tea are all right.
- ▶ Make access to fluids easier. Since your loved one might forget where fluids are located in the home, keeping a drink within reach can solve this problem.
- ▶ Offer fluids frequently. Schedule beverage breaks throughout the day. Also, a positive approach may encourage a person to drink more often: Do not ask, “Would you like some water?” Instead, say, “Here’s some refreshing water.”
- ▶ Monitor how much your loved one drinks and urinates, especially during hot weather. It’s helpful to keep a chart of both these activities.
- ▶ Adapt the environment. Fear of incontinence can lead people with dementia to reduce their fluid intake. To make it easier for them to use the toilet, provide clutter-free passageways to the bathroom and ensure that clothing can be taken on and off without difficulty.

– **ASHLEIGH B. EGAN**



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THE SITUATION

Taking a drink of water is something we have all done countless times in our lives. However, during various stages of Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia, your loved one may view a glass of water or a carton of milk as a foreign object, not knowing its purpose or what to do with it. He or she will likely need your help in locating fluids, pouring, drinking and ensuring the right amount of liquid intake. In addition, it will be up to you to watch for signs of dehydration (lack of sufficient fluids), which include dizziness, dry mouth, concentrated urine, muscle cramps, or excessive tiredness, confusion or agitation. As the outside temperature heats up, proper hydration becomes more important than ever. Here are some tips to be on the safe side:

Prepare in Advance

Certain medications can decrease a person’s thirst, cause excessive urination and increase the risk of dehydration. Educate yourself about the potential side effects of your loved one’s medications. Almost all medications should be taken with a full glass of water.