

## Hydration – Making a difference

As people get older their thirst sensation can lessen which can lead to not drinking enough. 25% of older adults suffer mild chronic dehydration.

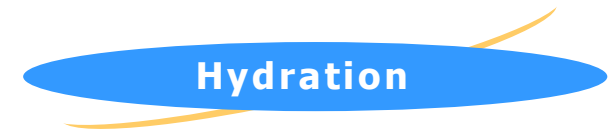
This can result in confusion, urinary tract infections, headaches, irritability and greater risk of pressure sores.

As people become less mobile, they may find it difficult to get up to get themselves a drink. Additionally fear of incontinence may also encourage individuals to drink less.


The average amount of water that people need to drink is 8 – 10 glasses of water per day, but this increases in warm weather and during infection.

## Health Benefits of Water

Water is essential to health, and is one of the basic nutrients for life. Medical evidence shows that good hydration can assist in the management and prevention of many medical conditions. The provision of drinking water can reduce the risk or potential of harm to people.



  
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## Encouraging people to drink

Some people do not like water as they find it bland and without taste. Therefore it is perfectly acceptable for them to drink flavoured water, squash or watered down fruit juice - anything that makes drinking water more enjoyable.

Older people may need to be reminded, encouraged and even convinced to drink more. Using a positive approach often helps. "I've got some cool refreshing water for you" is often more productive than "Do you want something to drink?"

Water based drinks are best served fresh and cool – not left in open jugs. This is much easier if you work in a residential setting. If you support individuals in their own home think about how drinks can be left and still be attractive to the person much later on. Perhaps you can leave a jug with lots of ice cubes which will melt over time.



Many people prefer to drink "little and often". Try to offer water at mealtimes and between meals if this is possible.

Serve small quantities of water alongside coffee and tea and explain why it would be beneficial to drink more water.

Older people often worry about increased toilet visits in the night, so avoid late evening drinks. Encourage water consumption from when people wake in the morning.

Older people can lose their thirst response as well as their taste sensation. Never take it for granted that they will know when they need to drink.

Whenever possible get families and friends involved in encouraging their loved ones to drink.



As the weather gets warmer, increase the availability of drinking water and encourage individuals to drink more. Older people perspire more in warmer weather.

For trips and for use in outside areas, providing residents with a personal water bottle can help. These are easy to carry, to clean and to refill, and can be marked clearly with the resident's name.

During activities or group events, try serving glasses of cool water with slices of lemon and ice cubes before the activity begins. Make sure you keep refilling their glasses as the event goes on, so they can drink little and often. By providing citrus fruit with water, you are also helping the consumption of Vitamin C.

Hot water with a piece of fruit – such as lemon, lime or orange – can appeal to those who want a hot drink.

Think of an easy counting system to help those with mild memory problems, confusion or dementia to consume enough water.

Persevere! Helping people to drink more will take time and patience

