

September 15, 2017



FACT SHEET: AVOIDING DEHYDRATION

To avoid becoming dehydrated, it is important to drink plenty of fluids, especially water even if you don't feel thirsty. When temperatures reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit (F) and higher, increasing water intake to combat the heat is important. Depending on your physical activity and level of heat exposure during hot weather, it's a good idea to drink more water. Health experts have found that fluid requirements vary from person to person. Additionally, the level of water intake differs for different age groups during extreme heat.

Birth – 6 months: healthy infants normally do not need extra water. Babies typically get all the fluid they need from breastfeeding or formula. On a hot day, a small amount of water may be needed, check with your physician on how much to give.

Babies 6–12 months: breast or formula-fed babies who are receiving solid foods should also be receiving water to drink.

Children 12 months and older: should be reminded to drink fluids, preferably water throughout the day and encouraged to drink more on hot days.

Adults: When exposed to temperatures approaching 90° and higher, depending on physical activity level and heat exposure, adults should typically drink more water than usual.

Signs of Dehydration

Recognizing the signs of dehydration and knowing what to do, is very important. Signs of dehydration include thirst, weakness, nausea, muscle cramps, feeling dizzy and light headed, decreased urine levels and/or urine that has a strong odor or is darker than normal, tiredness, sluggishness, irritability and headaches. All, some or none of these signs may be present so the best way to avoid dehydration is to monitor fluid intake, modify activity level or reduce the length of activity according to weather conditions.

Preventing Dehydration

Don't wait for symptoms of dehydration to begin, such as dry mouth, flushed skin, headaches, lightheadedness or fatigue. You can prevent dehydration by drinking fluids throughout the day. Your body is often dehydrated before you feel thirsty. Avoid becoming dehydrated by staying out of the direct sun, wearing light-colored loose fitting clothing, limiting physical activity, and using fans when available. People with infants and young children are urged to keep cool by spending time in air-conditioned environments as much as possible. If you suspect you are becoming dehydrated, get to a cool or shady area and sip cool water or fluids. If your condition does not improve, seek medical attention immediately. Severe dehydration is a life-threatening emergency; if left untreated it may cause brain damage and death.

Treatment of Dehydration

If you notice signs of dehydration and treat it quickly, you should recover completely. Sipping and/or drinking water or fluids that contain electrolytes can treat dehydration, as well as sucking on ice cubes. People who have medical conditions such as kidney and heart disease, require a fluid restricted diet, or have problems with fluid retention should consult a physician before increasing their consumption of fluids. If you notice symptoms are not improving, contact your doctor for treatment.