

# Preventing dehydration

**Dehydration occurs when the body loses more fluid than it takes in.  
It is particularly common in older people due to:**

- **Medications** - some medications have a diuretic effect while others can cause increased sweating
- **Decreased thirst** - a person's thirst can lessen with age
- **Mobility problems** - or reliance on others to provide drinks can result in insufficient fluid intake
- **Memory problems** - without prompting some people forget to drink enough fluids
- **Reluctance to drink** - many older people are reluctant to drink to avoid the need to go to the toilet
- **Decreased kidney function** - as our bodies age they lose kidney function and we are less able to conserve fluid

**Diarrhoea and vomiting (D&V) can quickly  
cause dehydration in the elderly!**

**Recognising the signs can help prevent serious illness and admission to hospital!**

## **Mild to moderate symptoms**

- Feeling thirsty and lightheaded
- Dry mouth
- Tiredness
- Dark coloured, strong smelling urine
- Passing urine less often than usual
- Dry skin
- Headache
- Constipation

## **Severe symptoms**

- Irritability/confusion
- Little or no urine
- Weak rapid pulse
- Low blood pressure
- Fast breathing
- Dry mouth and tongue
- No sweat or tears

**To prevent dehydration, particularly if you have an outbreak of D&V,  
ensure all residents have regular drinks as they often  
do not feel thirsty and may not ask!**