

# Hydration at home

Adult Community Health Services



Patient information leaflet

## What is dehydration and what causes it?

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Water makes up approximately 60% of a healthy human body.

It is essential for lubricating the joints and eyes, aiding digestion, flushing out waste and toxins, and for keeping skin healthy.

Dehydration occurs when the normal fluid content of your body is reduced and is generally caused by not drinking enough fluid or by losing fluid and not replacing it.

You can lose fluid through vomiting, diarrhoea, sweating, open wounds, and frequent urination due to an underlying medical condition and some medication.

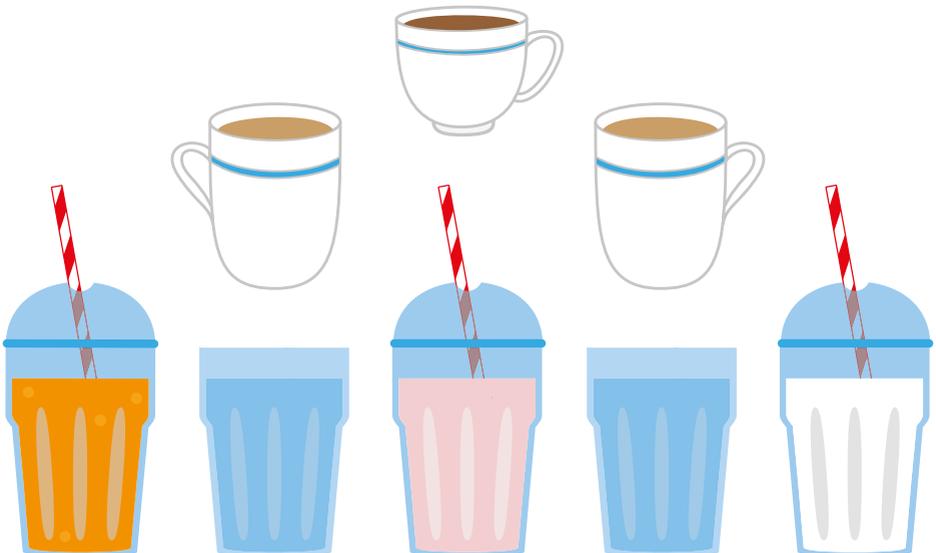
## Drink plenty of fluids

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Adults should try to drink 2 litres (six to eight glasses) of fluid every day.

Higher intakes of total fluid will be required for those who are physically active or who are exposed to hot environments. Obese adults may also require a higher intake of total fluid.

Individuals with certain conditions e.g. heart failure and kidney failure can retain fluid, and may need fluid to be limited. Your GP or Consultant will advise on optimal levels in these instances.



## Symptoms of dehydration include:

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- Dry mouth or lips
- Dry eyes
- Dry skin
- Thirst
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Light-headedness
- Reduced alertness
- Reduced ability to concentrate
- Dark coloured, strong smelling urine

Increase your intake of fluid (e.g. water, decaffeinated tea/coffee, herbal/fruit tea, squash, milk, juice) if you experience any signs of dehydration, or if you experience bladder or bowel urgency or frequency.

A simple method to track your body's hydration levels is by monitoring your urine.

The colour of your urine can reflect how much water your body needs.

Dark urine may be an indication that you are not drinking enough fluids.

As we age, it is however possible to be passing plentiful amounts of clear, non-offensive smelling urine and still to be dehydrated.

## Good hydration can help with the treatment and prevention of:

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- Pressure ulcers
- Constipation
- Confusion
- Kidney and gallstones
- Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)
- Circulatory problems
- Diabetes control
- Incontinence
- Low blood pressure
- Heart disease

Some individuals with a UTI may experience mild urinary incontinence and it may be tempting to reduce your fluid intake. However, this may exacerbate your symptoms and you should continue to maintain your fluid intake.

## Practical tips

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- Have water at meal times and at least hourly.
- Switch from smaller to larger glasses of fluid as you will tend to drink more this way.
- Always ensure you have a glass of water by your bedside and near your usual seating area.
- Try hot water with a piece of fruit in e.g. lemon or orange for a change
- Fruit or herbal teas make a change for those who like hot drinks
- Try warm squash e.g. blackcurrant or orange

- Try 'traditional' flavours of drinks e.g. dandelion and burdock, cream soda, ginger ale
- Eat hydrating foods such as custard, soup, juice of tinned fruit, ice cream, jelly, ice lollies and smoothies.
- Also eat fruit and vegetables that have a high fluid content e.g. pears, melon, orange, peach, tomatoes, cucumber, pineapple and grapes.

## References

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- Healthy Hydration Guide (British Nutrition Foundation, August 2018)





## Contact details

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### **Guildford and Waverley Adult Community Nursing Team**

**Telephone:** 0300 3034739

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### **PALS and Advocacy contact details**

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Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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