

Dehydration

FACTS:

- Dehydration is a condition that occurs when a person loses more fluids than he or she consumes.
- Our bodies are about two-thirds water and require a certain amount of fluid intake on a daily basis to function – the minimum is equal to about four 8-ounce glasses of fluid per day.
- The amount of fluid one needs varies with activity and age, but most active persons need two to three times the minimum amount. When someone gets dehydrated, it means the amount of water in his or her body is below this level and the body cannot function normally.
- Dehydration occurs when your body loses too much fluid. This can happen when you stop drinking water or lose large amounts of fluid through diarrhea, vomiting, sweating or exercise.

Summer Safety Month

RESOURCES:

Medline Plus

What is Dehydration?

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000982.htm>

University of Michigan Health System

Summer sports dehydration: A potentially dangerous game

<http://www.med.umich.edu/opm/newspage/2001/dehy.htm>

KidsHealth

http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/emergencies/dehydration.html

Mayo Clinic

Summer exercise: How to Keep Cool in Hot Weather

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/exercise/HQ00316>



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

What are the symptoms?

Thirst is one indicator of dehydration, but **it is not an early warning sign**. By the time you feel thirsty, you may already be dehydrated.

Other symptoms of dehydration include:

- feeling dizzy or light-headed
- having a dry or sticky mouth
- producing less urine or darker urine
- muscle cramps

To avoid heat-related illness, keep these basic precautions in mind:

- **Take it slow.** If you are used to exercising indoors or in cooler weather, take it easy at first. As your body adapts to the heat, gradually increase the length and intensity of your workouts. If you have a chronic medical condition or take medication, ask your doctor if you need to take additional precautions.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Your body's ability to sweat and cool down depends on adequate rehydration. Drink plenty of water while you're working out — even if you don't feel thirsty. If you are planning to exercise intensely or for longer than one hour, consider sports drinks instead. These drinks can replace the sodium, chloride and potassium you lose through sweating. Avoid drinks that contain caffeine or alcohol, which actually promote fluid loss.
- **Dress appropriately.** Lightweight, loose-fitting clothing promotes sweat evaporation and cooling by letting more air pass over your body. Avoid dark colors, which can absorb the heat. A light-colored hat can limit your exposure to the sun.
- **Avoid midday sun.** Exercise before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m., when it's likely to be cooler outdoors. If possible, exercise in the shade or in a pool.
- **Wear sunscreen.** Sunburn decreases your body's ability to cool itself.
- **Have a backup plan.** If you're concerned about the heat or humidity, stay indoors. Work out at the gym, walk laps at the mall or climb stairs inside an air-conditioned building.

Don't ignore the signs!

If the condition progresses, you will start to feel much sicker as more body systems (organs) are affected by dehydration. Remember to drink lots of fluids, especially on hot, dry, windy days. Water is usually the best choice.