



### **Dehydration – Moderate Risk**

Dehydration occurs when your body doesn't have enough water and other fluids to carry out its normal functions. Dehydration can be mild, moderate, or severe, based on how much of your body's fluid is lost or not replaced. Not replacing lost fluids that occur from diarrhea, vomiting, excess sweating, or increased urination can result in dehydration. Drinking more fluids can often reverse **moderate dehydration**. Individuals who are able to recognize they are thirsty and ask for fluids or obtain fluids on their own are at lower risk for dehydration.

#### **Risks that contribute to dehydration include but are not limited to:**

- Sweating too much, from hot weather or fever
- Fever – especially over 101 degrees
- Increased or constant vomiting or diarrhea
- Urinating too much
- Taking certain medications, such as fluid pills
- Older adults
- People with certain diseases, such as uncontrolled diabetes

#### **Symptoms of severe dehydration include but are not limited to:**

- Not urinating, or very dark yellow or amber-colored urine
- Dry, shriveled skin
- Irritability or confusion
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Rapid heartbeat
- Breathing rapidly
- Sunken eyes
- Listlessness
- Shock (lack of blood flow through the body)
- Unconsciousness or delirium

#### **Outcomes associated with being severely dehydrated include but are not limited to:**

- **Shock**
- **Delirium**
- **Organ failure**
- **Death**

**Severe dehydration is a life-threatening emergency;** Call your health care provider, go to the emergency room, or call the local emergency number (such as 911).

**Recommendations:** Awareness of risk is important. Be alert to changes that might trigger dehydration and report changes. Consider including ways to prevent dehydration in the individual's care plan such as:

- Drink plenty of fluids every day, even when you are well.
- Drink more and wear light clothing when the weather is hot or you are exercising.
- If an individual is ill, pay attention to how much they are able to drink.
- Pay close attention to fluid intake in children and older adults.
- Anyone with a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea should drink plenty of fluids.
- DO NOT wait for signs of dehydration. If you think an individual may become dehydrated, call your health care provider. Do this before the person becomes dehydrated.



# Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services

## References

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U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2015) Dehydration. Retrieved from: <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000982.htm>

New York Times (2016). Health Guide: Dehydration. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/health/guides/disease/dehydration/overview.html>

**Please note: this information is not intended to replace the advice of a doctor or NP. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health providers with any questions about your medical condition.**