

# Getting Enough Fluids While in Cancer Treatment

Miranda Moss has always made an effort to drink plenty of water. But after starting treatment for breast cancer, she found herself needing to drink even more.

*"The chemotherapy treatments left me really dehydrated immediately. That's an immediate side effect."*

One reason is that cancer treatments like chemotherapy and radiation can cause vomiting and diarrhea, which make your body lose extra water.

Signs that you're dehydrated include a dry mouth, swollen or dry tongue, headache, constipation, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, dry skin, reduced urine production or dark urine.

It's possible to be dehydrated even if you're not thirsty.

*"Older adults often have a less sensitive feeling of thirst, even when they're not sick. And dehydration can often make people feel less thirsty."*

To prevent dehydration, drink plenty of fluids during the day. Keeping a water bottle or other beverage with you at all times can help you remember to drink.

*"Sometimes I actually have multiple beverages of different kinds at the same time, because I never know what texture is going to feel best in my mouth."*

Some experts recommend eight 8-ounce glasses daily, but fluid needs can differ from person to person. Ask your health care provider how much you need to drink based on your health and activity level.

Water is an ideal beverage because it replenishes your body's fluids without adding any sugar or calories. If you don't like the taste of plain water, you can add some flavor with slices of fruit or a splash of juice.

Sparkling water is another alternative.

*"I started drinking sparkling water a lot because I really like the way the bubbles feel in my mouth when I'm having dry mouth issues or my mouth feels really dry. I also like coconut water because it's very soothing to my mouth."*

If you feel sick to your stomach from your cancer treatment, sip small amounts of water throughout the day. You can also suck on a popsicle or ice chips.

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Milk, regular or decaffeinated tea, and coffee can also hydrate you.

Smoothies made from milk or a non-dairy alternative blended with frozen fruit may replenish both fluids and nutrients.

Sports drinks and sodas can help you get enough fluids too but consume them in moderation.

*"Sports drinks contain electrolytes like sodium and potassium, which you often lose from vomiting or diarrhea. Ginger ale or other sodas can help calm an upset stomach and increase your fluid. However, they can contain a lot of sugar and extra calories."*

You can also get fluids from the foods you eat, especially soup, fruits, and vegetables.

Medicines prescribed by your provider that control vomiting and diarrhea are another way to prevent dehydration. They can be very effective, especially if taken before treatment.

In addition, your provider might recommend that you drink an oral rehydration solution, which contains water plus sugar and salts.

You can also get it through an IV.

Call your provider if you have signs of severe dehydration, such as extreme thirst, confusion, no urine or sweat production, fast heartbeat, very dark urine, or rapid weight loss.

Dehydration can have serious health consequences so it's important to stay on top of it. By doing so, you'll be better able to handle your cancer treatment... and eventually ... to heal.