

Understanding Dehydration

Dehydration happens when your body loses more fluid than you take in. You lose fluids through sweating, vomiting, and using the bathroom. Our bodies need water and other fluids in order to work properly. In fact, dehydration can cause very serious symptoms if not treated. So it's important to make sure that you stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day.

Anyone can become dehydrated but the risk is higher for babies, young children, pregnant women and older adults. Babies and young children, especially when they are sick, may not be able to communicate that they are thirsty. During pregnancy, vomiting and diarrhea are more common which can lead to dehydration. And older adults don't carry as much water in their bodies and cannot tell as easily when they are thirsty.

Watch out for these symptoms of dehydration in young children: Dry mouth and tongue; Crying without tears; No wet diapers for 3 hours or more; Irritability; Being unusually sleepy or drowsy; High fever; Eyes that look sunken in. If you notice any of these symptoms, call your healthcare provider.

Symptoms of dehydration in adults include: Feeling very thirsty; Dry mouth; Dry skin; Feeling tired; Dizziness; Not peeing or sweating like you normally do; Dark-colored urine. If you experience confusion, fainting, not being able to pee, a fast heartbeat or breathing faster than normal, get help immediately.

The best way to prevent dehydration is to drink water before you get thirsty. If you are thirsty you are already on your way to being dehydrated. Carry a bottle of water with you and keep it filled up throughout the day, eat foods high in water such as melons, berries, and lettuce, choose broth based soups, and limit the amount of coffee, tea, sports drinks and soda you drink. These drinks provide your body with fluids but can be high in caffeine and calories.

Talk to your healthcare provider about how much water is right for you to stay healthy.