

Emergency Services

Dehydration (Adult)

What is dehydration?

Your body needs water to work properly. Water keeps your blood flow easily around your body and to your body organs such as your heart and brain. Dehydration (sounds like *dee-hi-dray-shun*) is when your body does not have enough water.

What causes dehydration?

You can get dehydrated (sounds like *dee-hi-dray-ted*) if you:

- Do not drink enough water.
- Stop drinking liquids.
- Have fluids leave your body such as from:
 - Sweating a lot (like from a fever)
 - Doing heavy exercise
 - Throwing up (vomiting)
 - Having liquid bowel movements (diarrhea)
 - Urinating (going 'pee') often

How to know when you are dehydrated

- You are **thirsty**.
- You have a dry mouth and dry eyes.
- You have a headache.
- You feel tired and jittery.
- You have muscle cramps, especially in your legs..
- Your urine (pee) is darker than usual.
- You feel dizzy when you stand up or sit up.

Call your family doctor if:

- You do not feel better in a day.
- Your headache gets worse.
- You can not drink the amount of water you need because you feel too sick.
- You can not take your medicines because you feel too sick.
- You do not go pee (urinate) for 8 hours or more.

If you can not contact your family doctor, go to a walk-in medical clinic or to the nearest Emergency Department.

Call 9-1-1 right away if:

- You feel lightheaded or dizzy and it does not go away when you lie down.
- You feel like you are going to faint or you have fainted.
- You are restless, confused, or acting unusual.
- Your breathing is fast and shallow.
- Your skin is cool and damp to the touch. Maybe you are sweating a lot.
- You feel very weak and shaky.
- You are very thirsty, and your mouth and eyes are very dry.
- You feel very sick to your stomach or can not stop throwing up.

Dehydration (Adult) - *continued*

How to take care of yourself at home

You need to drink enough liquids to keep yourself hydrated.

Here are a few things you can do.

- Drink liquids such as water, ginger ale, or sports drinks. Take small sips often. Do not drink a whole glass at once. Try drinking liquids that are at room temperature or warm. This can help an upset stomach.
- Take any medicines with water.
- **Do not** drink anything that has caffeine in it. Examples of caffeine drinks are coffee, tea, colas, and energy drinks. These drinks can cause you to become dehydrated.
- **Do not** drink alcohol, including beer and wine. These also cause you to become dehydrated.

How to prevent dehydration in the future

- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water each day.
- Drink water before, during, and after exercise or heavy work.
- Drink small sips of water often when you are not feeling well.
- If you do drink fluids with caffeine or alcohol, make sure to drink equal amounts of water.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- Your pharmacist
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at www.HealthLinkBC.ca.