



Nutrition for Older Adults: Water and Dehydration

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Water

Recommended fluid intake is 13 cups of fluid a day for males and 9 cups a day for females. Water can come in many forms:

- Water
- Juice
- Milk
- Soup
- Coffee
- Tea
- Soft drinks

Dehydration

Although many fluids are available many older adults become dehydrated.

Many factors put older adults at higher risk of dehydration.

- Thirst sensation decreases with age. Older adults may not notice thirst.
- Body water decreases with age. This leaves a smaller margin of safety for water loss.

- Some medicines can cause water loss.
- Some older adults may limit fluid intake due to fear of incontinence.
- Some older adults may limit fluid intake if mobility problems make it difficult to get to the bathroom.
- Bed-ridden or wheelchair bound older adults may have problems reaching fluids.

Risk of Dehydration

Some symptoms of dehydration are:

- Weakness
- Headaches
- Increased body temperature
- Increased breathing and pulse rate
- Dizziness
- Confusion

Dehydrated older adults are also at higher risk of infections and pneumonia.

Tips to Help Fluid Intake

- Have fluids at meals and snacks.
- Keep fluids close at hand in a pitcher or glass to help with fluid intake.
- Decreased strength can make it difficult to lift a full glass or pour water from a pitcher. If a person is weak using a small glass or a straw can help with fluid intake.

Sources

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