

# Fluids are Especially Important for Elders

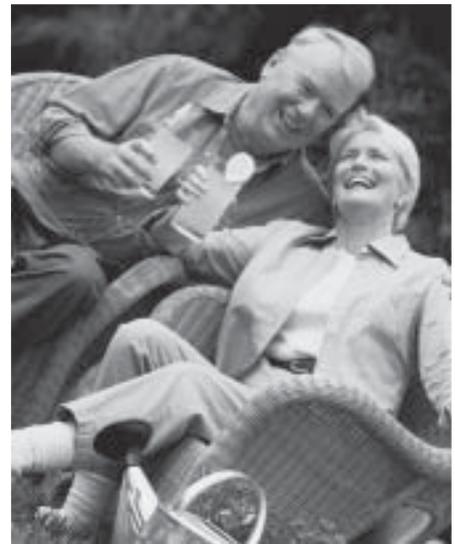
Older people cannot rely on thirst to drink enough fluids, because our ability to sense thirst declines over the years. Sometimes, older people restrict their fluid intake so that they don't have to go to the bathroom as often. Others just forget to drink much liquid. Do you take care to drink enough fluids *every day*?

How much fluid is enough? Your urine should appear pale, not concentrated and dark-colored. Healthy adults should drink 8 cups or more of liquids each day.

Nutritious fluid choices include plain water, low-fat milk, 100% fruit juices, and low sodium vegetable juices and soup broth. Be cautious about drinking sweetened beverages, because they can add a lot of calories to your diet. Beverages with caffeine (such as coffee, tea, cocoa and some soft drinks) and alcohol act as mild diuretics. You can count only about half of the fluid from these beverages as helping you meet your fluid intake goal. Sports drinks contain quite a bit of sugar, sodium and other minerals, and are not recommended for older adults as a usual beverage. Solid foods contribute water, especially fruits like oranges and watermelon, and juicy or leafy vegetables such as spinach, tomatoes and celery. Soft, blenderized and pureed foods, including gelatins and puddings, can also add liquid to your diet, but try to drink 8 cups of liquid in addition.

When you have a fever or diarrhea, or vomit, hemorrhage or get burned, your need for fluids increases. Also, when the weather you are exposed to is very hot, very cold, or very dry, or your environmental air is heated or recirculated, you need to drink more. Of course, when you do a lot of physical activity and sweat, you need to replace the fluids lost. Large adults need more fluid than smaller people.

If you don't get enough fluid, you become dehydrated. This makes your kidneys have to work too hard, decreases the amount of saliva you make and reduces the tears moistening your eyes. It can make your skin feel flushed or less elastic. You may get a headache or feel fatigued or dizzy. It can increase your pulse. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke may result.



Constipation is a problem for some. Liquids make bowel movements soft and bulky, so they pass more easily.

If you have excessive thirst or very frequent urination, confide in your health care professional. You may have a condition that needs medical attention.

Keep a beverage close by so you can sip on it regularly. Why not refresh with a cup of your favorite fluid right now?

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