

Wise up on water!

Water makes a valuable contribution to health in old age.

Unfortunately, many older people do not drink adequate amounts of water. A recent survey in care homes for the elderly found that most residents only consumed 2-4 glasses of water per day

So how much water do we need?

Adults are recommended to drink 6 to 8 glasses a day to prevent dehydration

We get water from both food and drink. About 80 per cent comes from drinks and 20 per cent is contained in food. Some older people, however, have diminished appetites or poor nutrition and may miss out on fluid contained in food.

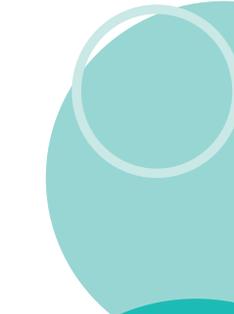
The kidneys play a vital role in regulating the amount of fluid in the body, but their function deteriorates with age. Age-related changes, such as alterations in hormone levels, also mean that water balance takes longer to be restored even after a drink has been consumed.

Although fluid balance can usually be maintained under normal circumstances, dehydration can be caused by:

- cognitive impairment
- changes in functional ability
- medication such as laxatives, diuretics or hypnotics

5 Tips to help you stay hydrated:

- Fruit and Vegetables are a great source of water. Eat these daily to stay hydrated and maintain your health and wellbeing
- Keep a water bottle handy to encourage you to drink water wherever and whenever
- Remember to drink more when you exercise or spend time in hot environments
- Set an alarm to remind you to drink a glass of water regularly
- Add a slice of lemon, lime and/or basil to your water to give it some extra flavour



So why Hydrate?

Hospitalisation in older people	Dehydration has been shown to increase by two-fold the mortality of patients admitted to hospital with stroke. It also increases the length of hospital stay for patients with community-acquired pneumonia.
Kidney and gallstones	Good hydration can reduce the risk of kidney stone formation by 39 per cent.
Urinary infections and continence	Water helps maintain a healthy urinary tract and kidneys. Many older people are loath to drink during the evening to eliminate the need to go to the toilet during the night. However the restriction of overall fluid intake does not reduce urinary incontinence frequency or severity.
Falls	Dehydration has been identified as one of the risk factors for falls in older people, since it can lead to a deterioration in mental state, and increase the risk of dizziness and fainting. In hard water areas, tap water provides a significant proportion of dietary calcium, which is essential for good bone density and the prevention of osteoporosis and fractures.
Diabetes	Good hydration levels help maintain healthy blood sugar levels.
Cognitive impairment	Mild dehydration can cause light-headedness, dizziness, headaches and tiredness, as well as reduced alertness and ability to concentrate.
Heart disease	Adequate hydration reduces the risk of coronary heart disease and it also protects against blood clot formation by decreasing blood viscosity.
Constipation	lack of water is one of the most frequent causes of chronic constipation.
Skin	Being well hydrated is a good way to keep skin healthy and young-looking. Mild dehydration causes skin to appear flushed, dry and loose, with a loss of elasticity, which makes it look older than it is.
Low blood pressure	Drinking a glass of water five minutes before standing helps stabilise blood pressure, and prevents fainting.
Pressure ulcers	you are twice as likely to develop pressure ulcers because dehydration reduces the padding over bony points.