

Dehydration Can Cause Serious Health Problems



Everyone at all ages is at risk of dehydration, especially during these hot summer months. Dehydration is caused by the excessive loss of water in the body through urine, sweat and breathing. The average adult loses about 10 cups of water a day, that loss includes electrolytes, which are minerals that manage the balance of fluids in your body. The water that is lost each day is typically replaced by the food and beverage we consume. But when you lose more water and minerals than you consume, dehydration will strike.

Possible complications caused by dehydration

Unchecked, severe dehydration can take a huge toll on the body. For instance, heat-related illness, which can range from cramps to heat exhaustion to life-threatening heatstroke, can occur. At the very least, dehydration that is ignored can make you feel weak and might end an otherwise pleasant summer's day in the emergency room.

Recommendations to keep dehydration at bay

Follow these suggestions to prevent your active **child** from becoming dehydrated:

- Be aware of your child's physical condition. If she is overweight, make sure she doesn't overdo it.
- Get your child used to the heat by gradually increasing the time spent with an activity in hot weather.
- Give your child water or sports drink, and make sure he takes a drink about every 20 minutes.
- Make sure your child wears proper clothing.
- Watch your child closely for any signs of dehydration.

Because senior adults need to drink 10 percent more fluids than younger adults and their sense of thirst is often diminished, dehydration is one of the most common causes for them to be hospitalized. To ensure the **senior adult** in your life stays healthy and hydrated, encourage them to drink six eight-ounce glasses of water a day and eat fruits and vegetables loaded with water, such as tomatoes, oranges and broccoli. **Babies** are also at greater risk for dehydration, and the summer is the time for parents to exercise extra caution. Your pediatrician can give you the best advice on keeping your baby hydrated.

Symptoms of mild to moderate dehydration

In our busy lives, it is often easy to forget to take the time to consume enough liquids. In such instances, and especially if the mercury is rising on the thermometer, it's important to know the symptoms of dehydration:

- Feeling thirsty
- A dry, sticky mouth
- Feeling sleepy or tired (children may be less active than normal when dehydrated)
- Decreased urine output.
- Crying that produces no or few tears
- Muscle weakness
- Headache
- Dizziness or light headedness

Symptoms of severe dehydration

Severe dehydration should be considered a medical emergency. The symptoms for this potentially life-threatening condition are:

- Extreme thirst
- Extreme fussiness or sleepiness in infants and children. Irritability and confusion in adults
- In infants, sunken fontanel, which are the soft spots on the top of a baby's head
- Very dry mouth, skin and mucous membranes
- Lack of sweating
- Little or no urination—if a little urine is produced, it will be dark yellow
- Shriveled, dry skin that lacks elasticity
- Sunken eyes
- Fever
- Low blood pressure
- Rapid heartbeat
- In the most serious cases, delirium or unconsciousness

What to do when dehydration occurs



Adults can treat mild to moderate dehydration themselves simply by drinking more fluids. Be sure to see a doctor in severe cases. Infants, children and senior adults need more care to treat dehydration. Call your family doctor immediately if your child develops severe diarrhea, with or without vomiting or fever; can't keep fluids down; is sleepy, fussy, disoriented or less active than normal; or exhibits any signs of mild to moderate dehydration. Take children and senior adults to the emergency room immediately or call 911 if you think a child or senior adult is severely dehydrated.

The physicians and staff at Logan Medical Center enjoy providing top-notch healthcare to our neighbors. However, we also want to keep you out of the Emergency Room. Stay hydrated, make sure loved ones drink enough water, and have a fun, safe summer! **Look to Logan,** www.myLoganHealth.org for healthcare information that's important to you.



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205 S. Academy Road
Guthrie, OK 73044
405-282-9449

Crescent Clinic
400 S. Grand
Crescent, OK 73028
405-969-2818

S. Division Clinic
2919 S. Division
Guthrie, OK
405-282-6301

Waterloo Clinic
301 E. Waterloo
Edmond, OK 73013
405-715-2000