

Caregiver Assistance News

“Caring for You - Caring for Others”

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



JULY 2023

Staying Safe in Extreme Temperatures - Dehydration

People in the U.S. are noticing hotter summers which impact all of our lives. Most, especially seniors, are in danger of dehydration leading to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Dehydration occurs when you use or lose more fluid than you take in, and your body doesn't have enough water and other fluids to carry out its normal functions. If you don't replace lost fluids, you will become dehydrated. This can happen either when a person doesn't drink enough, or when he or she loses large amounts of fluid through diarrhea, vomiting, sweating or exercise. A severely dehydrated body no longer has enough fluid to send blood to vital organs. This can cause shock, a life-threatening condition. Because older adults do not feel thirsty as much, make a special effort to provide the person in your care with enough fluids. A person's fluid balance can be affected by medication, emotional stress, exercise, nourishment, general health, and weather. Dehydration, especially in older adults, can increase confusion and muscle weakness and cause nausea. Nausea, in turn, will prevent him or her from eating or drinking, causing more dehydration.



Older adults can also become dehydrated because they may:

- Have kidneys that do not work well.
- Choose not to drink because of incontinence.
- Have physical problems that make it hard to drink or hold a glass, find it painful or exhausting to walk to the bathroom, or have difficulty communicating.
- Take medicines that increase urine output.
- Have minor illnesses such as influenza, bronchitis or bladder infections. Make sure the person in your care drinks extra fluids when they are not feeling well.

Stay Hydrated, Stay Safe

Drinking plenty of water is key to staying healthy in the heat. During hot weather, drink more liquid than your thirst indicates. Increase fluid intake, regardless of activity level. Avoid drinks containing alcohol, caffeine and sugar as they actually cause you to lose more fluid. If a doctor limits fluid intake, ask how much fluid to offer.

- Keep drinks cool, not cold, which causes stomach cramps.
- Wear loose clothing which helps air to circulate around your skin, allowing sweat to evaporate and cool your body.
- Stay out of the sun.
- Wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen. Sunburned skin hampers your body's ability to cool off.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; WebMD; MayoClinic.com; MedicineNet.

Understanding Danger Signs

Older adults naturally have a lower volume of water in their bodies, and may have conditions or take medications that increase the risk of dehydration.

Severe, acute diarrhea — that is, diarrhea that comes on suddenly and violently — can cause a tremendous loss of water and electrolytes in a short amount of time. If a person is vomiting along with diarrhea, the person loses even more fluids and minerals.

You can usually reverse mild to moderate dehydration by drinking more fluids, but **severe dehydration needs immediate medical treatment.**



Symptoms

Thirst isn't always a reliable early indicator of the body's need for water. Many people, particularly older adults, don't feel thirsty until they're already dehydrated. That's why it's important to increase water intake during hot weather or when ill.

The signs and symptoms of dehydration in an adult are:

- Extreme thirst
- Less frequent urination
- Dark-colored urine
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Headache
- Dry mouth, lips and eyes

When to See a Doctor

Call your family doctor if the person in your care:

- Has had diarrhea for 24 hours or more.
- Can't keep down fluids.
- Has bloody or black stool.
- Is irritable or disoriented and much sleepier or less active than usual.

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion occurs when the body becomes severely dehydrated. If left untreated, it leads to heat stroke. If you suspect a person is having a problem with the heat, err on the side of caution and insist they be in the shade and cool down.

Signs of Heat Exhaustion

- Heavy sweating, cold, clammy skin
- Dizziness or fainting
- A weak and rapid pulse
- Muscle cramps
- Fast, shallow breathing
- Nausea, vomiting or both

Source: Department of Health and Human Services; Caregiving in the Comfort of Home

Don't Fall!

Dehydration and Falls

Dehydration can be a very common cause of falls in older adults. It can often cause dizziness and a drop in blood pressure, which can increase the risk of falling. If the person in your care experiences incontinence, find ways to build their confidence around having a drink. This could be by encouraging them to drink small amounts often throughout the day so that they are less likely to urgently need the toilet after a big drink.

Taking Care of Yourself

Give Yourself Permission to Take an Intermission

Find a Mental Health Mentor - seek out one professional (mental health professional or minister) or more experienced caregiver to talk to. Discuss the impact of your caregiving experience. They can advise you, comfort you, and be your advocate to access services. Maintain regular contact with this person.

Find a Support Group - attend a caregiver support group meeting. You will discover that others are living the same experience, and you will gain invaluable suggestions and ideas.

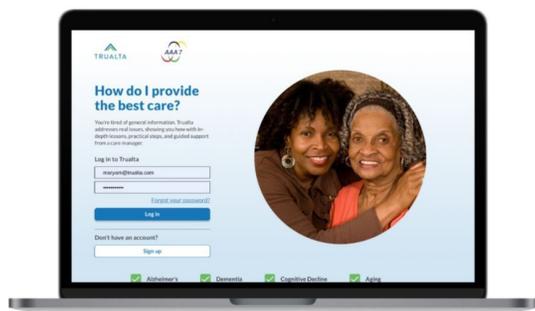
Take Time to Laugh - allow yourself to find the humor in caregiving, and maintain regular contact with friends who are upbeat. Laugh heartily.



2023 Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Eligible seniors can receive \$50 in coupons to use with participating farmers in the Program. If you have participated in the past, you must re-apply each year. Coupons can be used through October 2023. For more information, call the AAA7 Farmers Market Nutrition Program hotline at **1-800-343-8112** or e-mail **farmersmarket@aaa7.org**.

Trualta helps families learn skills to manage care at home, provided for free by AAA7



- You can register today to access an **interactive eLearning environment**
- Short, quick lessons created by experts in aging
- Easy to use for all ages, completely private and **accessible 24/7**
- **No app required**, view on any browser, laptop, phone or tablet

The AAA7 is excited to offer this interactive opportunity to caregivers to support them in their caregiving role at no charge!

Sign up today!

aaa7.trualta.com



Dehydration and Dementia

If the person in your care is thirsty or needs water, but has dementia, they may not know how to express that. When this happens, we have to be aware of the signs of thirst. Simply having a glass of water out may be enough. But if the glass is soon empty, it doesn't mean the person drank it—the water may have been spilled or poured out. Make sure the cup or glass is comfortable— not too heavy or an awkward shape. To help ensure the person in your care is hydrated, offer a glass of water, but stay with the person to make sure they are drinking it.



Plain water can become boring, so try offering other liquids the person enjoys, such as juice, decaffeinated tea, hot and cold milky drinks, smoothies, yogurt, and warm or cold soups. High water fruits and vegetables such as watermelon, tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, etc. also add fluids to the diet. Ice cream and sorbets are cooling and hydrating.

Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented, or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.



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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs.

The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.