



VICTORIAN CONTINENCE RESOURCE CENTRE

Water for Wellbeing: fluids and the older person

Why are fluids important?

OUR BODIES ARE APPROX
60% FLUID



- Fluid is our transport system in the body, taking nutrients to the cells and removing waste
- It softens bowel actions, making them easier to pass
- Fluids help to maintain body temperature
- Each day we lose fluid through breathing, sweating, urine production and in bowel motions

Fluids – the good and the bad

- Fluids come in many forms; **water, icy poles, fruit juice, milk, tea, coffee** and **cordial**. Many foods are mainly fluids (custard, jelly, ice cream, yoghurt, fruit and soup) and these all contribute to the required daily intake.
- **Tea and coffee** are a good source of fluid but because it contains caffeine, it should not be the only fluid a person drinks.
- **Alcohol should be limited** as it has a diuretic effect that causes excess fluid loss from the body. **Extra water** is required to replace the fluid loss caused by alcohol consumption.



How much is enough?

- Most of us know that we should drink at least **1500mL** of fluid each day. Many frail older people are not drinking enough fluid to maintain adequate hydration and meet their daily bodily needs.
- **Some older people may be on fluid restrictions due to specific health conditions. It is advised to check with their doctor, who can establish a daily fluid goal for the individual.**

Some symptoms of mild dehydration are:

- Poor concentration
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Increased confusion
- Faints & falls



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Other signs of inadequate intake are:

- Passing small amounts of concentrated urine
- Constipation
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Poor skin elasticity
- Dry mouth, lips and tongue
- Low blood pressure (especially when standing/sitting)

Ways to encourage the older person to drink at least 1500mL of fluid each day

- It is important to get older people into the habit of drinking and not waiting until they feel thirsty, as they may already be dehydrated. The following are some suggestions for carers in residential and community care.

Residential Care

- Prompt or remind the client to start each meal with a glass of water.
- Place a jug of water within reach of the residents so it reminds them to drink (unless on fluid restrictions).
- Complete a 'fluid round' a couple of times a day
- Offer a full glass of water when giving medications, not just a few sips, to assist in swallowing.
- Have a daily fluid intake record to keep account of all the drinks actually consumed.

- Pay particular attention to those who are most at risk of not getting sufficient fluids e.g. clients with limited mobility, taking 4 or more medications, are incontinent, have UTIs or dementia.
- Encourage family/visitors to offer drinks or to have a drink with the resident (after communicating with care staff).
- Suggest a drink of water when sitting if about to move into a standing position.

Community Care

- Start each meal with a glass of water and have a cup of tea or coffee with morning and afternoon tea and again for supper.
- Place a jug of water within reach of the client so it reminds them to drink (unless on fluid restriction).
- Prompt clients to have a full glass of water when taking medications to assist in swallowing rather than a few sips.
- Prompt clients to use a daily fluid intake record to keep track of all drinks they have and place in a prominent position e.g. on the fridge.
- Pay particular attention to those who are most at risk of not getting enough fluids e.g. clients with limited mobility, taking 4 or more medications, are incontinent, have UTIs or dementia.
- Have a drink of water with the client or encourage family members to offer water (after communicating with care staff).
- Suggest a drink of water when sitting if the client is about to move into a standing position.

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