Water makes up two thirds of our body. **It is vital we drink enough fluid to maintain a healthy balance.**

Most people get dehydrated by not drinking enough fluids or by losing fluids and not replacing them.

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Busting the myth

Tea and coffee are dehydrating - FALSE!
All non-alcoholic fluids count towards your fluid intake. However, decaffeinated versions are healthier choices.

Who can help?

Your GP or other healthcare professional can provide you with advice or information about preventing dehydration or can provide information on other services which might be able to help.

Other useful Contact:

- **Health Protection Service**
  Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm.
  Email: healthprotectionservice@wirral.gov.uk

For further information visit
nhs.uk/conditions/dehydration

This leaflet does not replace advice from medical or healthcare professionals.

If you have been advised to restrict fluid intake by a healthcare professional, this leaflet is not suitable for you.

If you're seriously concerned about someone, please call NHS 111 or 999 in an emergency.

Health Protection Service is part of Public Health Wirral Council. Review date: August 2022

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Dehydration

Simple steps to prevent it

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Check the colour of your urine:

Signs you are not drinking enough:

- dry mouth
- thirst
- headache
- loose skin
- dark or strong smelling urine
- constipation
- tiredness

Some medicines may affect urine colour. If you are unsure, please ask your pharmacist

What should you drink?

Aim for at least eight cups per day. Any fluid, except alcohol counts including milk, water, tea, coffee and fruit juice.

Other foods such as ice cream, ice-lollies, jelly, soup, yoghurt, milk puddings or water rich fruits such as melons can also count towards your fluid intake.

The key is to drink regularly throughout the day.

Who is at high risk?

You may be at risk of dehydration if you:

- are dependent on others to get you drinks or food
- have swallowing problems
- have a high temperature
- have diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- have taken part in physical activities
- are limiting your drinks because you have difficulty getting to the toilet on time
- are limiting your drinks because you don't want to get up through the night to go to the toilet

Good hydration can assist in preventing or treating:

- urinary tract infections
- headaches
- constipation
- dizziness (this can lead to falls)
- confusion
- kidney stones
- poor oral health
- pressure ulcers / skin conditions

Spotting the signs and symptoms of dehydration

- drinking less than usual
- feeling thirsty (although not everyone feels thirsty)
- dark coloured or small amounts of urine
- headaches
- tiredness
- dry mouth, lips or eyes
- lack of concentration
- confusion
- constipation
- urinary tract infections

What to do if you are concerned about yourself or someone you know

You can help prevent dehydration by:

- recognising the early warning signs
- don't wait until you are thirsty before having a drink
- make sure you have enough things available to drink throughout the day
- try to have a glass of water or juice handy at all times
- if you are having problems using utensils or the kettle, Occupational Therapy can help. Speak to your GP or nurse at the clinic as they will be able to advise you where to go for help
- if you are worried about getting to the toilet on time you should speak to your GP or nurse who can refer you to someone who can help

If you are concerned about someone else, consider:

- sitting down and having a drink or cup of tea with them
- talking them through the warning signs of dehydration
- encouraging them to have 6-8 drinks per day
- planning visits around mealtimes to get a sense of what they are drinking and if they have any difficulties drinking
- having a look in the fridge or cupboards to check they have enough things to drink
- encouraging them to attend local cafés / local lunches / visiting voluntary, community or faith organisations with luncheon clubs
- ensuring both hot and cold drinks are safely and freely accessible
- supporting access to both social and health services
- setting reminder alarm to remind them to have a drink