

## DESCRIPTION

The body is not able to function properly due to excess fluid loss, or not enough fluid intake. Dehydration is most dangerous in newborns, infants, and persons over 60. The dehydration may be mild, moderate, or severe, depending on the percentage of body weight lost.

## FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Dry mouth and swollen tongue. Severe thirst.
- Decreased or no urination; urine color may be deep yellow. In infants, there may be no wet diapers.
- Sunken eyes and wrinkled skin.
- Unable to sweat.
- Infants may have no tears when crying.
- Fatigue.
- Low blood pressure.
- Increase in heart rate and breathing.
- Dizziness; confusion; coma.

## CAUSES

- Severe vomiting or diarrhea from any cause.
- Heavy sweating.
- Too much urine output.
- Not taking in a sufficient amount of food or water.

## RISK INCREASES WITH

- Newborns, infants, and adults over 60.
- Illness with high fever.
- Not eating or drinking due to illness or mouth sores.
- Use of drugs, such as diuretics ("water pills").
- Excess exposure to sun or heat.
- Diabetes or kidney disease.
- Injuries to the skin, such as burns, can cause fluid loss through the damaged skin.

## PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- If you are vomiting or have diarrhea, take small sips of a fluid replacement product. This is important during an illness with a fever. Children need to be observed for any symptoms of dehydration.
- If you use diuretics, weigh yourself daily.
- Carry water with you to outdoor activities; drink plenty of water while exercising, and avoid exercising outdoors in very hot weather.
- Avoid drinking alcohol in hot weather.

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Depends on any medical problems. Usually with mild to moderate symptoms, no complications are expected.
- Severe dehydration or electrolyte imbalance may lead to seizures, heart problems, brain damage, or death.

## GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms. Blood tests may be done to check electrolyte levels (these include sodium, potassium, and bicarbonate). Electrolytes are vital for the body to function normally. Other tests may be needed to find the specific cause of the dehydration.
- Treatment will be aimed at restoring body fluids and treating any illness that is diagnosed.
- For mild dehydration, drink frequent small amounts of clear liquids. Large amounts may bring on vomiting.
- Drink electrolyte solutions. For adults, dilute solutions such as Gatorade or Recharge with an equal amount of water. For children, use special products (such as Pedialyte or Ricelyte). Instructions are on the labels.
- If the dehydration is severe, a hospital stay may be needed for fluid replacement.

## MEDICATIONS

Anti-diarrheal or Anti-emetic medications may be prescribed to control vomiting and/or diarrhea.

## DIET AND ACTIVITY

Rest in bed until symptoms get better. A special diet is usually not needed. Resume a normal diet after the diarrhea and vomiting stops. Avoid alcohol and highly seasoned foods for several more days.