

# Dehydration

## Getting Ready to Learn about Dehydration

Learning something new can be hard. It is even harder if you are not feeling well. The purpose of this education plan is for you and the staff to review this information together. Here are some good things to tell the staff:

- Who you want to learn with you. We would like to have someone who will be helping you at home learn with you.
- The best way for you to learn. Do you learn best by reading a book or pamphlet, or by doing things yourself?
- If you are not feeling well, if you are in pain or you cannot focus on learning right now.

This information is important to your health. We may explain something more than once. We will be giving you information in small bits over several days. If there is something you don't understand, "It's OK to Ask" us to explain.

## What I Need to Learn About Dehydration

By the time I leave the hospital I will be able to tell the staff:

1. What is dehydration?
2. The symptoms of dehydration.
3. How I can prevent dehydration.
4. How I will take care of myself at home.
5. When I will call the doctor.

## The staff will use three questions to teach me about Dehydration:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is this important to me?

The staff will ask me to repeat back important points in my own words, or ask me to show what I have learned. They want to make sure that I know about my problem and how to take care of myself.

**What is my main problem?**

Dehydration means my body has lost too much fluid. When I lose fluid, I also lose minerals such as sodium and potassium. These elements keep my body working normally.

Dehydration happens when I don't drink enough water. I also can become dehydrated when I vomit, have diarrhea, sweat, work hard or exercise hard, or have a fever. Fluid can also be lost if I take a "water pill" also called a diuretic. If I have diabetes and my sugar is too high, I may urinate more.

**What do I need to do?**

I will be able to tell the staff the symptoms of dehydration.

- I may be thirsty or my mouth will be dry.
- I may have a flushed face.
- I may have warm, dry skin.
- I may have parched or cracked lips.
- When I urinate not much urine comes out or it is dark yellow. The urine may also have a strong smell.
- I may feel lightheaded or dizzy. This could be worse when I stand up. I may fall and hurt myself.
- I may feel weak or not have any energy.
- I may have cramping in my arms or legs.
- I may have a headache.
- I may become irritable or confused.
- I could have a seizure.
- My skin could be dry or wrinkled. If my skin is pinched it takes a long time to go back to its normal position.
- My breathing could be fast and deep.

I will be able to tell the staff how I can prevent dehydration

- I should drink enough fluids to keep my urine light yellow.
- If I am physically active or exercise I should drink liquids before I start to exercise. I should drink small amounts during exercise. I should drink liquids after I'm done.
- If the weather is very warm I should drink more often.
- If I have diarrhea or am vomiting, I should try to keep drinking small sips of liquids. I should drink some fluid every hour.
- I should avoid caffeine and alcohol drinks which can make dehydration worse. My body uses more water to get rid of these liquids.
- I will talk to my doctor or nurse about the right kinds of liquid to drink.
- I will think ahead and carry liquids with me so I can take a drink often.

I will be able to tell the staff how I will take care of myself at home.

- I will know the symptoms of dehydration.
- I will drink extra fluids if I have symptoms of dehydration.
- I can suck on ice chips or flavored ice or drink sips of fluids if I have been vomiting. I will drink more fluids as the vomiting gets better.

I will be able to tell the staff when I need to call the doctor.

I will call the doctor when I:

- Have nausea or vomiting that stops me from getting enough fluids.
- Have a high fever (more than 101.5<sup>0</sup>F).
- Pass very little urine or none at all for 8 hours.
- Have a fast heartbeat, over 100 beats per minute.
- Feel lightheaded, dizzy or faint.

### **Why is this important to me?**

I am at risk of falling, having a seizure or kidney problems if I am dehydrated.

As part of my care I have received this education plan. I may also receive information about medicines I am taking.

## Dehydration Education Plan

### Resources for Staff

- [Dehydration](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus
- Lexi-comp online: Patient education: search for Dehydration in the *Procedure/Condition* box

### Teaching Tools (Items given to the patient)

- Dehydration Education Plan

### References:

- [Dehydration](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus

Always close each teaching session with the question, “What questions do you have for me?”

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