

Age and poor hydration

Many older people do not drink adequate amounts of water. About 80% cent of our water comes from drinks and 20% is contained in our food. A reduced appetite or poor nutrition can mean that many older people may miss out on vital fluids resulting in dehydration.

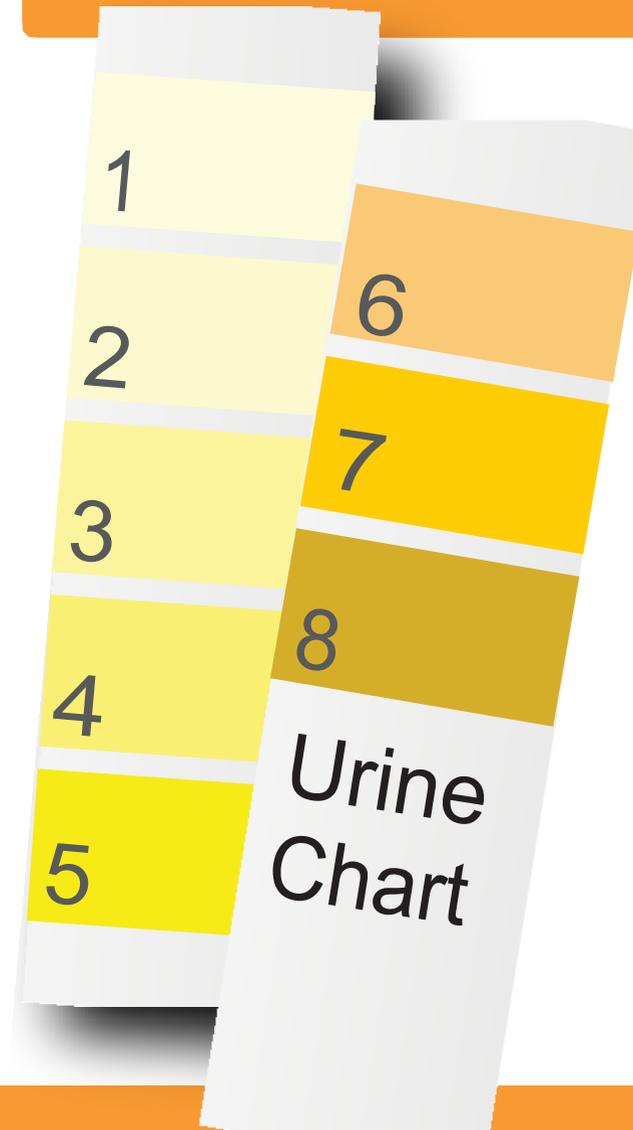
Our kidneys regulate the amount of fluid in the body as we get older their function deteriorates also changes in hormone levels can also mean that water balance takes longer to be restored even after a drink has been consumed.

Practical Tips for Staff and Carers

- Many people prefer to drink little and often.
- Try to offer water at mealtimes and at least hourly during the day.
- Many residents tend to drink all the water in their glass when swallowing tablets. Offering larger volumes at this time encourages residents to drink more.
- Residents worry about toilet visits at night, so encourage water consumption earlier in the day.
- Older people and those who are unwell can lose their thirst and taste. Never take it for granted that they will know when they need to drink.

If your urine is the same colour as 1,2 and 3 on the chart this shows your body is hydrated.

If your urine is the same colour as 4,5,6,7 or 8 on the chart, it's time to hydrate.



KEEPING HYDRATED

Staying hydrated is important for our health and wellbeing



Water is a basic nutrient of the human body and is critical to human life. (WHO). Although essential to health, along with other nutrient like carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, proteins and minerals, water is often overlooked.

Did you know?

About 60% of our body is made up of water and that we should drink 2 litres of water a day to keep us healthy

Hydration

Good hydration can assist in preventing or treating ailments such as:

- Cognitive Impairment
- Management of Diabetes
- Constipation
- Dizziness and confusion leading to falls
- Heart Disease
- Poor oral health
- Kidney stones
- Pressure Ulcers/skin conditions
- Low blood pressure
- Urinary infections and incontinence

Dehydration

Thirst, is the body's natural response to dehydration, however this is far less effective in older people and people who have had a stroke or who are suffering from Alzheimer's disease can be particularly insensitive to thirst.

Many people need to be reminded to drink more fluids to maintain healthy hydration levels – are you drinking enough water?

Using a simple check list of how many drinks you have in a day and how many times you go to the toilet will tell you or your carers if you need to take more drinks.

A simple method to track your body's hydration levels is by monitoring your urine, the colour of your urine can reflect how much water your body needs. Dehydration occurs when the body loses water faster than it can replenish the fluids.

Checking the colour of your urine is an easy way to assess hydration status: use the pee chart to score your urine 1-8 to see if you need to drink more.

Hydration chart

Use a hydration chart for patients who do not need a fluid balance chart but you want to ensure that they are drinking enough.

Dehydration can occur as a result of:

- Cognitive impairment
- Changes in functional ability
- Excessive exposure to heat or exercise
- Medication such as laxatives, diuretics or hypnotics
- Illness such as D&V and other infection

How can I tell if my patients are dehydrated?

Common signs of dehydration are:

- Decreased ability to carry out physical tasks, loss of appetite, reduction in urinary output, sleepiness, headaches, impatience and lack of concentration as well as more serious symptoms in the case of severe dehydration
- Skin that is severely dehydrated has less elasticity than normal can be a sign of dehydration;
- Not passing urine;
- Urine being dark in colour: healthy, hydrated urine is pale lemon or straw coloured;
- Urine that has an odour.