



# Drink Up! Preventing Dehydration in Seniors

With all the supersized and specialty drinks on the market, one might think staying adequately hydrated is fairly foolproof. But a five-year study of more than 15,000 Americans notes that among older adults age 71 and above, 95 percent of elder men and 83 percent of elder women do not drink enough water.

When a person uses or loses more water and other fluids than their body takes in, they face a condition called dehydration. **NOT DRINKING ENOUGH WATER AND OTHER FLUIDS THROUGHOUT THE DAY CAN LEAD TO THE BODY FAILING TO CARRY OUT NORMAL FUNCTIONS SUCH AS DIGESTION AND TEMPERATURE REGULATION.** Drinking more fluids can reverse mild to moderate dehydration, but severe dehydration requires immediate medical treatment.

Here are ways family members and caregivers can help prevent dehydration in older loved ones:

- Keep fluids in a reusable water bottle or lidded cup with a straw near the senior day and night.
- Check regularly that the senior's urine is light-colored and output is sufficient.
- Serve a variety of high-water-content foods such as fruits, soups, broths, vegetables and smoothies.
- The senior should not skip meals. Much of a senior's fluids comes from foods.
- Ensure the elderly loved one avoids the consumption of caffeine and alcohol, which can dehydrate the body.
- In warmer weather, schedule outdoor activities for the cooler part of the day.
- Monitor the senior's daily fluid intake by creating a hydration schedule. It is better for the senior to sip liquids every hour than drink extra at a meal.
- Consult with the senior's doctor about changing medications if the elder is taking laxatives or diuretics.

**"THE SENSATION OF BEING THIRSTY FADES WITH AGE, WHICH IS ONE REASON MANY OLDER ADULTS DON'T DRINK ENOUGH FLUIDS,"** said Frank Barton, owner of Right at Home of Salt Lake. "Cognitive challenges and just plain forgetting to hydrate are also common among seniors. Some elders have mobility restrictions and find it harder to physically secure a drink themselves. Keeping older adults fully hydrated is one of the most crucial health issues our in-home caregivers address every day."

**Right at Home of Salt Lake, a leading provider of in-home care and assistance for seniors, helps clients stay consistently well-hydrated, safe and comfortable at home.**

