

## Hydration support for older people

We should aim to have at least 1.6 – 2 litres (around 6 – 8 glasses) of fluid per day to stay hydrated. Keeping hydrated can aid the treatment of, or prevent, constipation, low blood pressure,

### Signs and symptoms of dehydration:

Dry mouth	Headache	Low blood pressure
Dizziness and falls	Confusion	Tiredness
Recurrent UTI's	Pressure ulcers	Constipation
		Dark coloured urine

### Common issues and practical tips to overcome them

#### Stroke, dementia and other problems can inhibit the feeling of thirst

- Encourage and assist with fluid intake throughout the day
- Drink based activities e.g. coffee mornings or mocktail making
- Give full glasses of fluids with medications

#### Fear of incontinence or needing the toilet at night

- If sleep is disrupted, try caffeine-free drinks in the afternoon or evening
- Reassurance that increasing fluid intake does NOT increase incontinence (long-term an increased fluid intake can reduce incontinence)
- Aim to have a minimum of 4 drinks before lunch

#### Reduced taste

- Provide wide variety of drinks (all fluids count apart from alcohol)
- Ensure drinks are fresh and served at the correct temperature

#### Poor mobility and/or dexterity (e.g. struggling to hold a cup)

- Provide assistance with drinking
- Ensure drinks are in reach
- Choose favourite/appropriate cup or mug e.g. lightweight, handle size, straw, spout, etc.
- Encourage fluid rich foods (see Hydration Boosters)

#### Difficulty communicating when thirsty

- Don't wait until someone asks for a drink
- Encourage use of picture cards or preference sheets
- Identify those at risk using fluid charts and detailed care plans
- Choice of language e.g. "I have made this for you"

#### Impaired swallow (dysphagia)

- Consider referral to Speech and Language Therapy



Do not use urine colour as the only indicator of dehydration as medication, foods and older age can alter the colour of urine. Look out for the signs and symptoms of dehydration (stated above) in conjunction with dark urine.

Visit [www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk](http://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk) and search 'Food First' for more information