

EAT TO LIVE

Constructive Aging · A Program of the Arise Foundation

Drink More Water

40 Years of Proven Life Management Skills Programs

"Water is the driving force of all nature."

— Leonardo da Vinci

The Most Overlooked Health Step of All

If there were a single health change that could improve energy, reduce confusion, ease digestion, protect the kidneys, improve skin, reduce headaches, and lower the risk of urinary tract infections — all at once, at no cost — everyone would do it. That change exists. It is drinking enough water. And most older adults are not doing it.

Dehydration among older adults is remarkably common and remarkably harmful — and most of the people who are dehydrated do not know it. The thirst signal weakens with age, which means you can be significantly dehydrated without feeling thirsty. By the time you feel thirsty as an older adult, your body is already behind.

What Dehydration Does to the Body and Mind

Even mild dehydration — as little as one to two percent below optimal — has measurable effects on the aging body. Concentration and memory suffer. Fatigue increases. Constipation worsens. Blood pressure can drop, increasing the risk of dizziness and falls. Kidney function declines. Urinary tract infections become more likely. Medications that rely on kidney function to process correctly become less safe.

In care settings, dehydration is one of the most common causes of sudden confusion in older adults — a condition that is often mistaken for a worsening of

dementia when it is actually a treatable medical problem. Adequate hydration is not a wellness suggestion. It is medical care.

How Much Is Enough

The general guidance for older adults is six to eight cups of fluid per day — roughly 48 to 64 ounces. This includes water, herbal tea, broth, milk, and the water content in foods like fruits and vegetables. Coffee and regular tea count, though their mild diuretic effect means they should not be your only source of fluid.

A simple way to monitor hydration is to look at urine color. Pale yellow means well hydrated. Dark yellow or amber means drink more. If you are not visiting the bathroom at least four to five times per day, you are likely not drinking enough.

Making It Easier to Drink More

- ▶ **Keep a glass of water within sight at all times.** What is visible gets used.
- ▶ **Drink a full glass of water first thing in the morning,** before coffee or tea. It starts the day right.
- ▶ **Add slices of lemon, cucumber, or mint to water** if plain water feels unappealing.
- ▶ **Have a glass of water with every meal and every medication** — it becomes automatic.
- ▶ **Herbal teas** — chamomile, peppermint, ginger — are excellent hydration sources and bring real comfort.
- ▶ **Broth-based soups count as fluid** and provide sodium and warmth, especially valuable in winter months.
- ▶ **Fruits and vegetables with high water content** — watermelon, cucumbers, oranges, strawberries — contribute to your daily fluid intake.

A Note for Those Who Limit Fluids for Bladder Reasons

Some older adults restrict their fluid intake because they worry about bladder leakage or nighttime bathroom trips. This is understandable — but it is

counterproductive. Concentrated urine actually irritates the bladder and worsens urgency and leakage. Drinking adequate water, spread throughout the day and reduced in the two hours before bed, typically improves bladder symptoms rather than worsening them. Speak to your doctor if bladder issues are affecting your willingness to drink enough.

Water is the simplest medicine there is. It costs nothing. It requires no prescription. It works quietly and reliably, day after day, keeping the body running as it should. Fill the glass. Drink it. Repeat.

If this program touched you, please consider a gift to Arise Foundation.

The Constructive Aging program is free to older adults and caregivers — made possible entirely by donor support.

Arise Foundation normally charges for its curricula and training programs.

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