

Keeping your Loved
Ones with Alzheimer's
or a related Dementia
HYDRATED
this Summer



CYN DUNN
CPCA, CDP, CLSC



For many, the long-awaited summer months suggest family picnics, cool drinks on the porch, and lazy afternoons at the beach. But, as temperatures soar, warm weather activities can increase the risk for another staple of summer: dehydration. Not getting enough fluids, or electrolytes especially when it is hot outside, can pose serious health problems for anyone, but older adults are at risk for dehydration.

WHY SENIORS ARE AT RISK

There are a few reasons in general and some specifically for those with a dementia makes them more susceptible to fluid and electrolyte imbalances.

1. With age, our body's ability to conserve water is reduced. This can make it more difficult to adapt to things like fluctuating temperatures.
2. Additionally, the sense of thirst diminishes with age. By the time someone *feels thirsty*, essential fluids could already be extremely low.
3. Certain medical conditions and medications can affect a senior's ability to retain fluids
4. Individuals with **dementia** may forget to eat and drink, and in
5. more advanced stages may have difficulty swallowing
6. Drugs like diuretics, antihistamines, laxatives, antipsychotics and corticosteroids can cause frequent urination that depletes water and electrolytes.
7. *Furthermore, seniors who experience incontinence often purposely refuse or limit fluids to avoid accidents.*

If severe dehydration goes unchecked, it can cause seizures due to electrolyte imbalance, a reduction in the volume of blood in the body (hypovolemic shock), kidney failure, heat injuries, and even coma or death.

ENTICE THEM WITH A DRINK NOT PURE WATER GET; AT THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE...

If your loved ones are like mine the thought of having to drink 6-8 cups of water every day is daunting and quite frankly mine just won't! We need to entice them with fun summery colorful drinks like the two I have here for you or popsicles, milkshakes and smoothies. Something savory is also a great choice it may present more meal like, warm chicken, beef or vegetable broth.

How you serve beverages can have an effect on a loved one's willingness and ability to drink them. Experimenting with different serving temperatures may make beverages more appealing. Individual preferences vary regarding the palatability of different temperatures. Serving a drink at the desired temperature will increase the likelihood it will be consumed.



USE PRETTY AND REMEMBERED DRINK WARE

Drinkware can be an important component as well. Someone with low vision might be able to see an opaque, brightly colored cup more easily and therefore drink from it more often. Particularly resistant seniors may find a beverage more appetizing if it is served in a pretty glass or with garnish. For example, try serving a healthy smoothie in an old-fashioned soda fountain glass with a piece of fresh fruit on the rim.

Sometimes specialized drinkware may be necessary for those with swallowing difficulties, tremors, arthritis, motor skill problems and muscular weakness. Cups with two handles, a no-spill lid, a built-in straw, or ergonomic features may simplify the process and prevent spills.

ADD HIGH WATER BASED FOODS TO THE DIET, EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS

Raw fruits and vegetables can pack a hydrating punch as well. For example, a small plate of cut vegetables, like celery sticks, cucumber slices, cherry tomatoes and bell pepper slices served with a healthy dressing or hummus for dipping can be a nutrition- and fluid-filled snack. Use the list below to add foods to your loved one's diet that will help keep them hydrated.

SIGNS OF SEVERE DEHYDRATION

- Confusion
- Little or no urination
- Dark or amber-colored urine
- Dry skin that stays folded when pinched
- Irritability, dizziness, or confusion
- Low blood pressure
- Rapid breathing and heartbeat
- Weak pulse
- Cold hands and feet

Picking up on the more subtle, early signs that a senior need to up their fluid intake is crucial.

Keep in mind that thirst is not usually a helpful indicator, because a person who feels thirsty may already be dehydrated. Initial signs to look for include headache, constipation, muscle cramps, dry mouth and tongue, and sleepiness or lethargy. Urine color is another helpful indicator and should be clear or light yellow for someone who is properly hydrated.

If you suspect dehydration in an elderly loved one, you can check for a decrease in skin turgor by pulling up the skin on the back of the hand for a few seconds; if it does not return to normal almost immediately, the person is dehydrated.



Recipes to Keep Your Loved Ones Hydrated with Fruits & Vegetable

Strawberries and Coconut Water



Ingredients

To make 2 Strawberry Mock tails combine:

- 1 cup (250ml) of fresh coconut water
- 1 cup (250 ml) strawberries hulled and sliced
- 3 T of sugar syrup or agave nectar

Directions

1. To make the sugar syrup, boil sugar and water together in a ratio of 1:3 sugar to water until it thickens to a runny syrup consistency. Store in a jar for all future cocktail making.
2. Measure 1 cup of coconut water, either directly from a cut-open coconut or from a store-bought container (if you are lucky enough to live in an area that sells fresh coconut water in a bottle).
3. Combine the strawberries and sugar syrup and blend with a blender to desired consistency.
4. Serve with ice. Get more information on making this [delicious strawberries and coconut drink](#).

Cucumber Lemonade with Basil



Ingredients

To make 3 to 4 Cucumber Lemonade treats combine:

- 1 English cucumber
- 3 C water
- 3 lemons
- 2 T sugar
- 1 small bunch basil
- 1 C soda water

Directions

1. Start by cutting your cucumber in half. Peel one half and cut it lengthwise (you can cut it in half again first if need be).
2. Scoop the seeds out and chop it into pieces.
3. Put the cucumber pieces in a food processor and puree until smooth.
4. Put puree in a fine mesh sieve over a container and push with a wooden spoon or spatula, extracting as much liquid as you can from the cucumber puree.
5. Fill a separate bowl or container with 3 cups water. Squeeze 2 lemons into the water and mix in the sugar.
6. Pour lemonade and cucumber juice into a pitcher or serving container. Slice remaining cucumber half (unpeeled) and remaining lemon and add to pitcher. Add basil, too. Refrigerate until chilled.
7. Serve with ice. Get more information on making this refreshing [cucumber lemonade drink](#).



If a senior has an aversion to fruits and vegetables, especially when they are uncooked, high water content foods like crudité's, salads or gazpacho may be an unrealistic approach. Instead,

1. By adding healthy ingredients into foods, they already enjoy can yield small victories for a caregiver
2. Try adding a cup of fresh berries to a loved one's yogurt, cereal or dessert, or
3. Add slices of tomato and a few leaves of lettuce to wraps and sandwiches.

These may not seem like meaningful additions, but every little bit adds up. Incorporating these items on a daily basis can help your loved one prevent dehydration without significantly changing the amount of liquid they drink.

While these helpful guidelines make good health-sense, it is important to stay in communication with your loved one's doctor and keep in mind that managing some medical conditions, such as heart failure and kidney or liver disease, may require intentional restrictions of fluid intake.

Foods with High Water Content

Ingredient	Percent Water	Serving Size
Cucumber	96%	1 cup peeled and sliced
Tomato	94%	1 medium
Watermelon	92%	1 cup diced, or 10 balls
Bell pepper	92%	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sliced
Grapes	92%	1 cup
Cantaloupe	90%	$\frac{1}{10}$ (1 small wedge)
Orange	97%	1 medium
Blueberries	85%	1 cup
Apple	84%	1 medium

I would love to hear from you about the recipes for food and drink you use for your loved one.