

Infection prevention and control

Information for patients about the importance of hydration

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham, Salford or Macclesfield. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week



What is dehydration?

Dehydration occurs when the body loses water faster than it can replenish the fluids. Thirst is the body's natural response to dehydration, however 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. 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 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.

Checking the colour of your urine is an easy way to assess hydration status. If it is darker than usual you may not be drinking enough.

What are the signs of dehydration?

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
- not passing urine
- urine being dark in colour: healthy, hydrated urine is pale lemon or straw coloured
- urine that has an odour.

Why can dehydration occur?

Dehydration can occur as a result of:

- cognitive impairment
- changes in functional ability
- excessive exposure to heat or exercise
- medication such as laxatives
- illness such as diarrhoea and vomiting and other infections.

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

How much should I be drinking?

You should aim to drink 2 litres of water a day to keep healthy. Many people prefer to drink this little and often. Try and drink at least hourly.

Remember to discuss with medical or nursing staff if you are on a fluid restriction and don't exceed that.

Useful information

If you or any of your visitors are still unsure of the advice given above, please discuss with your medical or nursing team. Further information can be found at www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/water-drinks-nutrition/