

EVERY SiP COUNTS

Stay Hydrated

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are infections of the bladder, kidneys or the tubes in our body that carry urine. Drinking or consuming fluid rich foods helps dilute your urine and can help flush away the bacteria that can cause a urinary tract infection, so it's important to stay hydrated.

This leaflet contains advice and guidance on how to stay hydrated and is particularly aimed at those 65 and over who are most at risk from getting a UTI.



What is healthy hydration?

Fluids make up over two thirds of our body and we need enough fluid in our bodies to stay healthy. Being well hydrated brings physical benefits (e.g., helping digestion, keeping skin healthy, aiding waste and toxin removal) as well as mental health benefits, e.g. reduced tiredness and confusion.

Why is hydration so important for older people?

As we get older, our sense of thirst decreases, and our kidneys do not work as well. It may also be more physically difficult to drink. Certain conditions, such as dementia and acute illness increase the likelihood of becoming dehydrated.

What are the effects of not drinking enough fluid?

Becoming dehydrated affects our health, quality of life and wellbeing. Dehydration is a common cause of hospital admission and can slow down recovery time. Dehydration can also:

- Lead to infections, such as urinary tract infections
- Make the symptoms of other illnesses worse
- Increase the risk of constipation, falling and developing pressure sores
- Reduce mental performance (e.g., memory, attention, reaction times) and increase tiredness

Signs of dehydration

You're dehydrated when you lose more fluids than you have consumed. Feeling thirsty is usually a good indication that you have become dehydrated. If you struggle to recognise when you should have a drink, other signs of dehydration include:

- **strong-smelling urine (pee)**
- **feeling dizzy or lightheaded**
- **feeling tired**
- **dry mouth, lips or eyes**
- **bad breath**
- **headaches**
- **urinating less than usual**

How much should we drink?

Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid each day (a minimum 1.5 litres). All non-alcoholic fluid counts including water, tea, coffee, milk, fruit juice and smoothies – every sip counts! About a fifth of the fluid we need each day comes from food. Eating fluid-rich foods (such as cucumber, tomatoes, watermelon and strawberries) is a great way to increase your water intake. These foods tend to be fruits and vegetables, so consuming them will also help you to maintain a healthy diet. If you are worried about going to the toilet in the night, try and drink the recommended 6-8 glasses of fluid throughout the day.

Tips for you

- Drink your favourite drinks little and often – every sip counts!
- Try adding pieces of fruit (such as lemon, lime or orange slices) to a glass or bottle of tap water. Doing this will add some essential vitamins and minerals to your drink, as well as giving it a fruity taste.
- Taking a refillable water bottle with you on your travels will ensure you always have a drink nearby. Using a refillable bottle instead of bottled water is also a lot cheaper and better for the environment.
- Having water bottles/jugs to hand can act as a visual reminder to drink.
- Alcohol is a diuretic, so drinking lots of it makes you go to the toilet more. It's important that you replace the water that leaves your body when drinking alcohol to ensure you don't get dehydrated.
- Include more fluid-rich foods e.g., soups, tinned fruit in juice and adding sauces to meals, can help increase your fluid intake.
- If you live a busy lifestyle, drinking water regularly can sometimes become an afterthought. There are a variety of hydration apps available for your smart phone that will remind you to drink, while also allowing you to set goals and track your progress. You could also use the start or end of your favourite TV programmes as triggers/ reminders for a drink.

Helping someone to drink more

If you are a friend, family member, carer or health and social care worker of someone who needs to drink more fluids, here are some things you could do:

- Make extra drinks during your visit and share drinks together
- Buy a range of drinks and fruits/smoothies
- Provide encouragement to drink little and often
- Suggest drinks from the person's childhood, or ice creams with wafers for fun alternatives
- Buy a drinking aid, e.g., cup with electronic reminders to drink, or specialist cup with handles
- Set up electronic aids, e.g., alarms and reminders on devices may help the person drink more

Urinary tract infections (UTI's)

Dehydration can increase the risk of urinary tract infections (UTI's). UTI's are caused by bacteria getting into the bladder, kidneys or the tubes in our body that carry urine.

When should you get help?

The following symptoms are possible signs of serious infection and should be assessed urgently:

- Kidney pain in your back just under the ribs
- Not peeing all day
- Trouble breathing
- Visible blood in your pee

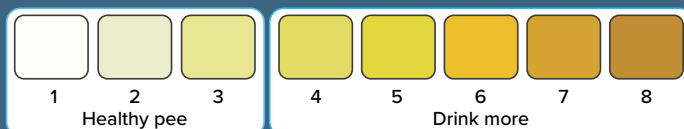
- Temperature above 38°C or less than 36°C.
- Shivering, chills and muscle pain or very cold skin
- Feeling very confused, drowsy, or slurred speech
- Symptoms are getting a lot worse, or not starting to improve within 48 hours of taking antibiotics

What to do and where to go if you have a UTI

Contact your GP, pharmacist or NHS 111. More information can be found here on the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-tract-infections-utis/

Use this urine colour chart to check for signs of dehydration.



Some medicines may affect urine colour. If you are unsure, please ask a pharmacist.

For any questions or queries regarding these resources, please contact:

bswicc.ipc@nhs.net