

### **Dehydration – Critical Risk**

Dehydration occurs when your body doesn't have enough water and other fluids to carry out its normal functions. Not replacing lost fluids that occur from diarrhea, vomiting, excess sweating, or increased urination can result in dehydration. Dehydration can be characterized as mild, moderate or severe. It is difficult to reverse severe dehydration by increasing fluid intake by mouth. An individual with multiple symptoms of or severe dehydration may result be considered at **critical risk**.

#### **Risks that contribute to dehydration include but are not limited to:**

- Sweating too much, from hot weather or fever
- Fever – especially over 101 degrees
- Increased or constant vomiting or diarrhea
- Urinating too much
- Taking certain medications, such as fluid pills
- Older adults
- People with certain diseases, such as uncontrolled diabetes

#### **Symptoms of severe dehydration include but are not limited to:**

- Not urinating, or very dark yellow or amber-colored urine
- Dry, shriveled skin
- Irritability or confusion
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Rapid heartbeat
- Breathing rapidly
- Sunken eyes
- Listlessness
- Shock (lack of blood flow through the body)
- Unconsciousness or delirium

#### **Outcomes associated with being severely dehydrated include but are not limited to:**

- **Shock**
- **Delirium**
- **Organ failure**
- **Death**

**Severe dehydration is a life-threatening emergency;** Call your health care provider, go to the emergency room, or call the local emergency number (such as 911).

**Recommendations:** Awareness of risk is important. Be alert to changes that might trigger dehydration and report changes. Consider including ways to prevent dehydration in the individuals care plan such as:

- Drink plenty of fluids every day, even when you are well.
- Drink more and wear light clothing when the weather is hot or you are exercising.
- If an individual is ill, pay attention to how much they are able to drink.
- Pay close attention to fluid intake in children and older adults.
- Anyone with a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea should drink plenty of fluids.
- DO NOT wait for signs of dehydration. If you think an individual may become dehydrated, call your health care provider. Do this before the person becomes dehydrated.



## Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services

- Please contact a Registered Nurse Care Consultant after developing your plan of care for technical assistance and support. Call the Office of Integrative Health at DBHDS at 804-786-1746.

### References

Mayo Clinic (2016) Dehydration. Retrieved from: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dehydration/home/ovc-20261061?p=1>

U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2015) Dehydration. Retrieved from: <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000982.htm>

New York Times (2016). Health Guide: Dehydration. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/health/guides/disease/dehydration/overview.html>

**Please note: this information is not intended to replace the advice of a doctor or NP. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health providers with any questions about your medical condition.**