

Memory Care Tip

People with Alzheimer's disease are especially likely to experience dehydration. Depending on how advanced the disease is, the patient may forget to drink, adding to an already diminished ability to sense thirst as experienced by all older people.

Patients with late-stage Alzheimer's may have difficulty swallowing, and, therefore, be resistant to take fluids by the mouth.

Some patients who are aware of their incontinence problem may avoid drinking fluids, and their embarrassment of the issue may prevent them from communicating about it with a caregiver.

Patients with late-stage Alzheimer's may have difficulty swallowing, and, therefore, be resistant to take fluids by the mouth. Try joining the patient at the table or bedside with a cool beverage for each of you, so that it seems like a social event.

It's important to approach resistance with patience. If the patient declines water, do something else for five or so minutes, then try again. Another option is to offer water-dense foods such as watermelon and citrus. ■



Seniors and Hot-Weather Safety

Too much heat is unsafe for everyone. It is even riskier for those who are over age 65 or who have health problems, as these groups generally do not adjust to major temperature fluctuations as fast as younger people. According to the National Center for Environmental Health, more Americans die from over-exposure to hot weather than by any other natural disaster.

Heat-Related Illness

Being hot for too long can cause several illnesses, all grouped under the name *hyperthermia*. Hyperthermia occurs when there is an unusual increase in core body temperature, and the body cannot release enough heat to normalize itself.

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. When a person is experiencing heat stroke, the body is unable to control its rising temperature through sweating. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided; therefore, it is important to know the warning signs:

- Extremely high body temperature (above 103°F)
- Red, hot, dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Confusion or unconsciousness

These are signs of a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call 9-1-1 while you attend to the afflicted person. Move him or her to a shaded or



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air-conditioned area and immerse in cool water. Depending on your location, opt for a cold bath or shower, sponge bathe with cold water, or place cold compresses on the neck, armpits, and body. If the person is conscious and able to swallow, give cool water or nonalcoholic, decaffeinated beverages.

Use the Buddy System

Heat-induced illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness, so people who are age 65 or older should have someone check on them twice a day during a heat wave.

Be proactive and have a plan set up before the need arises. You might organize a phone tree or find out if local churches or senior groups have volunteers who can help. A local senior center, library, or other community venue may offer its building as an air-conditioned “cooling zone” open to the public during a heat wave; this can be a great resource for seniors who do not have air-conditioning in their homes or choose not to use it because of the operating cost. ■

HEAT STROKE FACTS



Heat stroke can occur in as few as 10 minutes when a person is exposed to extreme temperatures.

AS WE AGE, WE LOSE SOME OF OUR ABILITY TO SENSE THIRST, WHICH INCREASES OUR DEHYDRATION RISK.

A recent University of Chicago Medical Center study found that 40 percent of heat-related fatalities in the U.S. were among people over age 65.

HEAT STROKE KILLS AN AVERAGE OF 658 PEOPLE IN THE U.S. EACH YEAR.



Never leave a person or pet inside a parked car, even with the window cracked. The temperature inside the vehicle can rise 20 degrees within 10 minutes.



Stay Hydrated, Stay Safe

Dehydration can be serious for anyone, but it is especially problematic for seniors. Dizziness and muscle weakness are common symptoms of dehydration, so the risk of a fall increases.

Seniors are particularly susceptible to dehydration, and the reasons go beyond simply not drinking enough fluids. The elderly generally do not sense thirst as strongly as younger people, so caregivers should offer beverages throughout the day. Other factors may include diarrhea, taking prescribed medications such as diuretics, and the body's tendency to hold less water as we age due to natural loss of muscle mass.

It is important to drink water on a schedule as you would with crucial medications. It's also wise to avoid caffeine and alcohol, as both cause more frequent urination; not offsetting these beverages with water and/or electrolyte-balancing drinks can lead to dehydration faster than you'd expect.

So, how much to drink? The common recommendation is to drink eight 8-ounce glasses each day. That's easy to remember, but here's a more accurate calculation that takes the size of the person into consideration: Take a person's weight and divide by three. That's the number of ounces he or she needs. For example, a 150-pound woman needs 50 ounces per day. A 175-pound man needs 58 ounces. If a person is engaging in exercise, is sweating, is exposed to hot weather, or has diarrhea, drink extra water to replace the lost fluids. ■



Signs of Dehydration

MILD: HYDRATE NOW

- Deep yellow urine, or infrequent urination
- Headaches
- Weakness
- Irritability

SERIOUS: SEEK URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION

- Low blood pressure
- Rapid breathing
- Severe muscle cramping
- No elasticity to skin
- Convulsions

QUICK QUIZ

Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

1. People with Alzheimer's may forget to drink and may not be able to communicate their needs.

True or False

2. Muscle cramps are not a sign of heat exhaustion.

True or False

3. Hyperthermia occurs when there is an unusual decrease in core body temperature.

True or False

4. People who are 65 or older should have someone check on them twice a day during a heat wave.

True or False

5. Heat stroke can occur in as few as 10 minutes when a person is exposed to extreme temperatures.

True or False

6. It is extremely important to recognize early symptoms of heat exhaustion which can lead to heat stroke.

True or False

7. Dehydration and the use of certain medications increase the risk of heat-related illnesses.

True or False

8. Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency.

True or False

9. If the heat stroke victim is conscious and able to swallow, give him cool water or other nonalcoholic drinks or decaffeinated beverages.

True or False

10. Light-yellow urine or frequent urination may signal dehydration.

True or False

Find quiz answers on the bottom of page 4.



Family Caregiver Education

Hope Hospice and Home Health offers our Family Caregiver Education Series for free to any member of the community, even if your loved one is not one of our patients. It is designed for family members who play a key role in providing caregiver assistance to a loved one living with a terminal or chronic illness or a disabling condition.

The 14-class series runs year-round and provides training, education, support, and caregiver resources relevant to family caregivers. Topics include meal-planning for the elderly, advocating for your loved one in the healthcare environment, and understanding advanced illness. Plus, much like a support group, these classes provide an opportunity to connect with others who have shared experiences.

Sessions are offered on one Saturday per month at our office in Dublin. Four classes are specific to dementia care. These have proved so popular that we also offer them on select Mondays as well to accommodate more people and various schedules.

Connect With Us

There is no charge to attend Family Caregiver classes, but we request your RSVP so that we can plan for seating and handouts. All classes are held at the Hope office: 6377 Clark Avenue, Dublin CA 94568.

You can view the current class schedule at HopeHospice.com/caregivers. Questions and RSVPs go to Debbie Emerson at debbiee@hopehospice.com or (925) 829-8770.



In-Service Training

Hope is dedicated to helping you, your patients, and their families. We can provide in-service education to doctors, nurses, and caregivers.

When patients and their loved ones are unfamiliar with hospice or home health care, our team provides free informational meetings and trainings. We want families to be well informed and comfortable with the choices they make.

As a non-profit agency that has served the Tri-Valley for 40 years, we are committed to providing quality, compassionate care to all members of the community. Let us help you. Contact the Hope Outreach team today!

IN-SERVICE TRAINING TOPICS

- Working with dementia patients
- Pain in the elderly
- Skin care of the elderly
- Fall prevention
- Agitation/terminal restlessness
- Senior nutrition
- Medication administration
- Respiratory concerns
- MRSA/C-Diff
- Body mechanics

For More Information

How can Hope Hospice help your team? Contact our Director of Outreach, Kari Rayford, LVN, at (925) 829-8770 or karir@hopehospice.com.