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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/dehydration.html>

Dehydration

What is dehydration?

Dehydration is a condition caused by the loss of too much **fluid from the body**

[<https://medlineplus.gov/fluidandelectrolytebalance.html>] . It happens when you are losing more fluids than you are taking in, and your body does not have enough fluids to work properly.

What causes dehydration?

You can become dehydrated because of:

- Diarrhea [<https://medlineplus.gov/diarrhea.html>]
- Vomiting [<https://medlineplus.gov/nauseaandvomiting.html>]
- Sweating [<https://medlineplus.gov/sweat.html>] too much
- Urinating too much, which can happen because of certain medicines and illnesses
- Fever [<https://medlineplus.gov/fever.html>]
- Not drinking enough water or other fluids

Who is more likely to develop dehydration?

Certain people are more likely to develop dehydration:

- Older adults. Some people lose their sense of thirst as they age, so they don't drink enough fluids.
- Infants and young children, who are more likely to have diarrhea or vomiting
- People with chronic illnesses that cause them to urinate or sweat more often, such as **diabetes** [<https://medlineplus.gov/diabetes.html>] , cystic fibrosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/cysticfibrosis.html>] , or kidney problems [<https://medlineplus.gov/kidneydiseases.html>]
- People who take medicines that cause them to urinate or sweat more
- People who exercise or work outdoors during hot weather

What are the symptoms of dehydration?

In adults, the symptoms of dehydration include:

- Feeling very thirsty
- Dry mouth [<https://medlineplus.gov/drymouth.html>]
- Urinating and sweating less than usual
- Dark-colored urine
- Dry skin
- Feeling tired
- Dizziness [<https://medlineplus.gov/dizzinessandvertigo.html>]

In infants and young children, the symptoms of dehydration include:

- Dry mouth and tongue

- Crying without tears
- No wet diapers for 3 hours or more
- A high fever
- Being unusually sleepy or drowsy
- Irritability
- Eyes that look sunken

Dehydration can be mild, or it can be severe enough to be life-threatening. Get medical help right away if the symptoms also include:

- Confusion
- Fainting [<https://medlineplus.gov/fainting.html>]
- Lack of urination
- Rapid heartbeat
- Rapid breathing
- Shock [<https://medlineplus.gov/shock.html>]

How is dehydration diagnosed?

To find out if you dehydration, your health care provider will:

- Do a physical exam
- Check your vital signs [<https://medlineplus.gov/vitalsigns.html>]
- Ask about your symptoms

Your provider may also order tests, such as:

- Blood tests to check your electrolyte levels, especially potassium [<https://medlineplus.gov/potassium.html>] and sodium [<https://medlineplus.gov/sodium.html>] . Electrolytes are minerals in your body that have an electric charge. They have many important jobs, including helping to keep a balance of fluids in your body.
- Blood tests to check your kidney function [<https://medlineplus.gov/kidneytests.html>] .
- Urine tests to check for dehydration and its cause.

What are the treatments for dehydration?

The treatment for dehydration is to replace the fluids and electrolytes that you have lost. For mild cases, you may just need to drink lots of water. If you lost electrolytes, sports drinks may help. There are also oral rehydration solutions for children. You can buy those without a prescription.

Severe cases may be treated with intravenous (IV) fluids with salt in a hospital.

Can dehydration be prevented?

The key to preventing dehydration is making sure that you get enough fluids:

- Drink enough water every day. Each person's needs can be different, so ask your health care provider how much you should be drinking each day.
- Avoid drinks that have sugar and caffeine [<https://medlineplus.gov/caffeine.html>] .
- Drink extra fluids when the weather is hot, especially if you are exercising or working outside. If you are losing a lot of minerals in sweat, sports drinks can help you. But some sports drinks have lots of sugar, so be careful not to drink too much of them.
- Get extra fluids when you are sick. If you are having trouble keeping liquids down, you can try taking small sips of water or sucking on ice chips.

Start Here

- Dehydration [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dehydration/symptoms-causes/syc-20354086?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/dehydration/symptoms-causes/syc-20354086?p=1>]

- Dehydration (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/dehydration.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/dehydration.html>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Osmolality Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/osmolality-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-de-osmolalidad/>]

Treatments and Therapies

- What to Do About Dehydration [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/dehydration-sheet.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/dehydration-sheet.html>]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Dehydration [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Dehydration%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]


 (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Hydration Strategies in Older Adults. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40732881>]
- Article: Thermoregulation and dehydration in children and youth exercising in extreme heat... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40514198>]
- Article: Recent Advancements in Wearable Hydration-Monitoring Technologies: Scoping Review of Sensors, Trends,... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40513095>]
- Dehydration -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Dehydration%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>] 

Children

- Dehydration (For Kids) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/dehydration.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/dehydration.html>]

- Drinks to Prevent Dehydration When Your Child is Vomiting [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/Drinks-to-Prevent-Dehydration-in-a-Vomiting-Child.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/paginas/drinks-to-prevent-dehydration-in-a-vomiting-child.aspx>]

- Sports Dehydration Safety Tips [<https://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/documents/sports/DEHYDRATION%20SAFETY%20TIP%20SHEET%202013.pdf>] (Safe Kids Worldwide) - **PDF**

Teenagers

- Dehydration (For Teens) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/dehydration.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/dehydration.html>]

Patient Handouts

- Dehydration [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000982.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Dehydration [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000982.htm>]

Thirst - absent [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003086.htm>]

Thirst - excessive [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003085.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Diarrhea [<https://medlineplus.gov/diarrhea.html>]

Fluid and Electrolyte Balance [<https://medlineplus.gov/fluidandelectrolytebalance.html>]

Heat Illness [<https://medlineplus.gov/heatillness.html>]

Nausea and Vomiting [<https://medlineplus.gov/nauseaandvomiting.html>]

NIH MedlinePlus Magazine

H2O for Healthy Aging [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/h20-for-healthy-aging>]

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