

DEHYDRATION

A person needs a certain amount of fluids, mostly water, for the systems in their body to work properly. Not enough fluids can affect every system in the body including the heart, kidneys, and even the lungs. When a person loses water from their body more quickly than they take it into their body, a problem can occur. This can happen quickly or slowly. It is called **dehydration**, a big health problem.

Signs of fluid loss include:

- Dry skin
- Dry cracked lips
- Thirst
- Less elasticity to the skin
- Going to the bathroom less often
- Strong-smelling, dark brown or dark yellow urine
- Less urine
- Fast weight loss
- Doesn't want to participate in activities
- Sleepy, hard to wake up
- Fast heartbeat, low blood pressure
- Fever, headache, confusion
- Reddened skin or yellowish color to skin

- Sunken eyes

What can cause fluid loss?

- Loose watery bowel movements/vomiting
- Less fluid intake
- Some medications like "water pills" (Lasix, torsemide)
- Too much of a medication in someone's blood
- Infections
- Needing to rely on other people for food and drink
- Fever
- Some health problems like Diabetes
- Hot weather or a long time in a hot place
- Exercise that causes too much sweating
- Fast breathing for a long time

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Call 911 if the person is:

- Looks very sick
- Has gray skin
- Won't wake up

When you think there may be a problem:

- Call or talk to your nurse or supervisor.
- If the person is sick, call the doctor.
- Give small amounts of fluid often.
- Write down the amount and frequency of their urine or bowel movement.
- Write down how much the person drinks and eats.
- Make sure the room is not too hot or too cold and the person is wearing the right kind of clothes.
- Talk to other staff about what you see.

