

Health Notes - Dehydration

Written by Dr. Watkins, Jr., MD
Wednesday, 07 September 2011 04:13



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“Health Notes” - DEHYDRATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

Definition – Loss of water and essential body salts.

BODY PARTS INVOLVED - Blood; gastrointestinal tract; kidneys.

SEX OR AGE MOST AFFECTED - Both sexes; all ages. Dehydration is most dangerous in newborns, infants and persons over 60.

SIGNS & SYMPTOM

No symptoms when not infected

When infected, it causes:

- Dry mouth
- Decreased or absent urination.
- Sunken eyes.
- Wrinkled skin.
- Confusion; coma.

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- Low blood pressure.

CAUSES

- Persistent vomiting or diarrhea from any cause.
- Persistent high fever.
- Heavy sweating.
- Use of drugs that deplete fluids and electrolytes, such as diuretics (“water pills”).
- Overexposure to sun or heat.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Newborns and infants.
- Adults over 60.
- Recent illness with high fever.
- Diabetes mellitus.
- Chronic kidney disease.

HOW TO PREVENT

- Obtain medical treatment for underlying causes of dehydration.
- If you are vomiting or have diarrhea, take small amounts of liquid with non-prescription electrolyte supplements every 30 to 60 minutes.
- If you use diuretics, weigh daily. Report to your doctor a weight loss of more than 3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in a week

WHAT TO EXPECT

APPROPRIATE HEALTH CARE

- Self-care.
- Doctor’s treatment.

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- Hospitalization for intravenous fluids (severe or prolonged illness only).

DIAGNOSTIC MEASURES

- Your own observation of symptoms.
- Medical history and physical exam by a doctor.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Blood pressure drop, shock and death from prolonged severe dehydration.

PROBABLE OUTCOME

Curable with control of underlying cause and replacement of necessary fluids.

HOW TO TREAT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Weigh daily on an accurate home scale and record the weight so you can be aware of fluid loss.
- If you have vomiting or diarrhea, keep a record of the number of episodes so you can estimate your fluid loss.
- For minor dehydration, take frequent small amounts of clear liquids. Large amounts may trigger vomiting.

MEDICATION

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Your doctor may prescribe intravenous fluids to replace lost water.

ACTIVITY

Rest in bed until you recover. You may read or watch TV.

DIET

Depends on the underlying disorder. Salty foods decrease the affect of dehydration.

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF

If you have symptoms of dehydration.