

DEHYDRATION

A person needs a certain amount of fluids, mostly water, for the systems in the 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 in, a problem can occur. This can happen quickly or slowly. It is called **dehydration** and it is a big health problem.

Signs of fluid loss include:

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

What can cause fluid loss?

- Loose watery bowel movements
- Vomiting
- Less fluid intake
- Some medication like "water pills" or Lasix
- Too much of a medication in someone's blood
- Infections
- Reliance on other people for food and drink
- Fever
- Some health problems such as 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:

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

When you think that there may be a health problem:

- Give small amounts of fluid often.
- 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.
- Call or talk to your nurse or supervisor.
- Write down the amount of their urine or bowel movement.
- If the person is sick, call the doctor.

