



## Why Water Matters for elderly people



“ ... it is essential to make drinking water accessible... water which tastes good and is safe and hygienic... ”

### What are the benefits of hydration for elderly people?

This document has been produced for nurses, carers and others involved in the welfare of elderly people, in particular vulnerable older people staying in nursing homes, care homes and hospitals.

For older people in care being well hydrated means:

- Fewer UTIs (urinary tract infections).
- Better kidney health.
- Less danger of dizziness and falls.
- Greater concentration and cognitive ability.
- Reduced incidence of constipation.

Being dehydrated is not just uncomfortable, it can be damaging to health. This is especially true for those taking medication for other medical conditions. As well as adding to confusion, dehydration can affect kidney function and be harmful to the liver, joints and muscles. It can also cause cholesterol problems, headaches, reduced blood pressure (hypotension), fatigue and constipation.

### Common signs of dehydration

- Decreased ability to carry out physical tasks, loss of appetite, sleepiness, headaches, impatience, confusion and lack of concentration.
- Skin that is severely dehydrated has less elasticity than normal. This can be a sign of dehydration.
- Not passing urine.
- Urine being dark in colour. Healthy, hydrated urine is pale lemon or straw coloured.
- Urine that has an odour.
- If thirst is experienced, it is likely that the person is already dehydrated.

### Do those in care have to drink water specifically?

Research shows that as we age, we drink less water. Drinking water is a healthy option, although fluids from other sources also count. Tea, milky beverages, other cold drinks or foods such as soup and salad that have a high-water content all make a useful contribution to hydration. The key thing is fluid intake of whatever kind. But, for elderly people trying to avoid intake of excess sugar due to diabetes, drinking water is a very good habit. To help this, it is essential to make drinking water accessible and having water that is convenient and easily dispensed which tastes good and is safe and hygienic helps entice elderly people to hydrate more frequently.



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## How to select a water dispenser

Firstly, you need to decide which type of cooler is most suitable.

There are two main types:

- Bottled water dispensers.
- Mains-fed dispensers.

If bottled water is preferred then a dispenser can be placed wherever required. Find a suitable cool, dark place to store a supply of bottles. Remember staff must be briefed on the safe and hygienic way to change the bottles. On the other hand, if there is a readily accessible source of mains water and limited storage space for bottles, then a mains-fed dispenser may be the best choice.

Your chosen supplier will be able to offer guidance on which type of dispenser will be most suitable. A mix of the two types around a building may be a useful solution.

Secondly, not all water dispensers are equal; whichever style of water dispenser is chosen, choose a supplier that is a member of the Water Dispenser & Hydration Association. The WHA is the leading trade body ensuring the highest standards of safety and hygiene. WHA members must adhere to strict codes of practice and are rigorously audited annually.

To ensure you find an accredited supplier, visit <https://twha.co.uk/find-a-member>

## The sustainable choice

Water dispensers are highly sustainable. Containers used for bottled water dispensers are collected, sanitised and reused 40 – 50 times before being safely recycled. Mains-fed coolers filter water from the mains water supply. In addition, many WHA members follow the '5 for 5 Sustainability Pledge' to ensure they are even more sustainable and follow best practice.

For further information visit: [www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk).

## Healthy Hydration Chart

There's one easy way to know if you are properly hydrated – check the colour of your urine against our 'pee chart'. Pale is good; dark urine means you could be in need of fluid. And if you find you are dehydrated, here's an easy way to rehydrate healthily; head straight to that water cooler... simple.

### well hydrated

Your urine is an ideal, pale straw colour. Keep up the good work.

You're okay but you could do with a small glass of water now.

You may be a little dehydrated. Drink a couple of glasses of water now.

You need to drink about up to half litre of water right now.

Not good! You are dehydrated and may have a headache. Drink a litre of water.

### poorly hydrated

Note: if your urine is even darker than this and or red/dark brown then dehydration may not be the problem. Seek medical advice.



**WHA**

Water Dispenser &  
Hydration Association

QUALITY • TRUST • STANDARDS

Choose a WHA member –  
for hydration you can trust  
[www.twha.co.uk](http://www.twha.co.uk)

Disclaimer: the information given here is for guidance only. If in doubt about your health seek attention from a medical professional.