



## Hydration and Delirium

by [Catherine D'Aniello, MSN, RN](#)



### Did you know that:

Delirium is different from dementia?

Dehydration is a cause of delirium?

Older adults can avoid delirium by staying hydrated?

Delirium is a mental disturbance characterized by new or worsening confusion, changes in level of consciousness or hallucinations. Delirium is different from the slow progression of dementia or Alzheimer's disease. It has a sudden onset from

hours to days and although delirium can be reversed, it is easier to prevent than cure.

All "elderly" adults (people over 65 years old) are at risk for delirium due to factors involving their own internal weakness and environmental insults. Some risk factors, such as advanced age or having dementia, are fixed. Other risk factors such as pain, malnutrition, dehydration, sensory loss, depression and fever are modifiable with intervention. With each factor present, delirium risk increases. Therefore, the key to preventing delirium is reducing the number of modifiable risk factors.

Infection and dehydration are common modifiable delirium risk factors. Older adults usually know when they have an infection, but do not recognize when they are dehydrated.

Mental status changes begin with mild dehydration and worsen with each stage, ending in delirium. In moderate dehydration, short-term memory loss occurs.

Once an older person is thirsty, they are already mildly dehydrated. Symptoms of severe dehydration include dry mouth and lips, sunken eyes, increased mental status changes and decreased urine output. This is a medical emergency which results in delirium and if not reversed, death ensues.

Failure to recognize signs of dehydration predisposes older adults to becoming increasingly and chronically dehydrated, which is a slippery slope towards delirium. Closing this knowledge gap will reduce delirium risk because inadequate fluid intake is relatively easy to remedy.

### Why are older adults prone to dehydration?

Generationally, older adults are not focused on hydration. Many seniors purposely limit fluid intake because they fear bladder accidents. Others with compromised mobility may curb fluid intake to avoid extra bathroom trips. Poor access to fluids or needing help to drink may limit intake. Many drink water only when taking medication. Living in over-heated indoor spaces dehydrates even without sweating.

Older adults have decreased muscle mass and increased fat; because 75 percent of body water is stored in muscle, seniors have less capacity to store water. Women have more body fat than men at any age, so older women are at even higher risk of dehydration. Due to decreased kidney function, older adults cannot conserve fluids as well as younger people.

*(Continued on next page)*

## Hydration *(continued from page 1)*

### How do you know if you are drinking enough?

An older adult, their home caregiver or family member can take simple steps daily to check hydration status. First, thirst should not be experienced at any time. Second, urine should be colorless or straw colored, and odorless. Being familiar with a urine color chart is good practice for all ages and critical for older adults to avoid dehydration. First morning urine should not be dark, and urination should occur every two to four hours during waking hours. Some medications and foods such as asparagus give urine an odor, but normally urine should not smell.

### Increase daily fluid intake, especially water!

At least half of your daily fluids should be water. Water significantly reduces older adults' risk of becoming delirious. Milk, vegetable or fruit juice, and soup are also healthy fluid choices. Carbonated and caffeinated drinks should be limited due to their diuretic effect. The body needs water to filter alcoholic beverages from the body. Therefore, increased water consumption is needed overall as well as to balance the dehydrating effects of unhealthy drinks. Drinking healthy fluids is as important as eating healthy foods.

### Family members and home caregivers should:

- Educate older adults on dehydration risks
- Encourage/remind seniors to drink
- Teach loved ones not to wait to feel thirsty to drink
- Teach loved ones to drink regularly throughout the day
- Make fluids easily accessible
- Serve fluids at a temperature the individual prefers
- Encourage water with ALL meals
- Boost the flavor of water by adding drops of lemon/ lime juice
- Limit fluid intake one to three hours before bed
- Offer popsicles, juice, gelatin, Italian ice, sherbet and pudding to those who dislike water.



Increased awareness of dehydration as a cause of confusion and delirium should begin when older adults are “young-old” (65-74 years) in order to form healthy drinking habits carrying them into “middle-old” (75-84 years) and “old-old” (85 years and above). Family should report poor eating or drinking to the primary care provider so interventions can be initiated to prevent dehydration and its consequences. Educate your older family members and their caregivers on the importance of hydration and ways to facilitate good fluid intake.

Why not reduce your or an older loved one's chance of developing delirium by eliminating the dehydration risk factor?

## Alzheimer's Awareness Month

The **Alzheimer's awareness ribbon** is represented by a **purple ribbon**, which symbolizes the movement to raise awareness, honor those affected, and support efforts to find a cure.

This color was chosen for its associations with **dignity, wisdom, and regal bearing**, qualities that Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia often threatens to diminish in those it affects.

The purple ribbon serves as a visual reminder of the courage required to confront dementia, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose within the community.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**JUNE**



Unscramble the list below. Write the words in the blanks provided on the right. Two blanks indicate the answer contains 2 words.

## Word Scramble

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Do you have an email address? Want to receive your newsletters electronically? Please submit your email address to [jferri@thrive-alliance.org](mailto:jferri@thrive-alliance.org) for future correspondence! If you desire a listing of caregiver support groups whether live or virtual please e-mail or call me at 812-399-5854. We also have a Thrive Alliance Caregiver Resources Facebook group. Please e-mail or call if you would like to be a part of the group. If you want removed from the mailings, please let me know as well.





# Managing Caregiver Stress

Monday, June 30  
3:30 - 5:00 p.m.  
Jennings County  
Public Library

## Powerful Tools FOR Caregivers

Caregiving can be stressful —physically,  
emotionally, and financially.

Join us for a workshop for caregivers to learn  
about self-care strategies and techniques to  
increase relaxation and reduce stress.

Manage the daily stresses you face  
as a caregiver.

Space is limited, so sign up today!



**Program is FREE, but registration is required.**

To register, call **812-372-6918 Ext 2402** or  
email **[jferril@thrive-alliance.org](mailto:jferril@thrive-alliance.org)**



# POWERFUL TOOLS FOR CAREGIVERS PROGRAM

**July 17 - August 21**

**Tuesdays, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM**

**VIRTUAL SESSIONS offered via ZOOM**

Date	Topic of Class
July 17	"Taking Care of You"
July 24	"Identifying & Reducing Personal Stress"
July 31	"Communicating Feelings, Needs, & Concerns"
August 7	"Communicating in Challenging Situations"
August 14	"Learning from our Emotions"
August 21	"Mastering Caregiving Decisions"

*Powerful Tools for Caregivers* is an educational series designed to provide you with the tools you need to take care of yourself. This program helps family caregivers reduce stress, improve self-confidence, communicate feelings better, balance their lives, increase their ability to make tough decisions and locate helpful resources.

This program is designed for those who are long-distance caregivers, caregivers to individuals with disabilities, grandparents raising children, caregivers of older adults, and those living with dementia.

**Program is FREE, but registration is required.**

**Deadline to register: July 14, 2025**

**To register: 812-372-6918 Ext 2402 or email [jferril@thrive-alliance.org](mailto:jferril@thrive-alliance.org)**

