Dehydration in Adults Treatment

Self-Care at Home

Try to get people who are dehydrated (even those who have been vomiting) to take in fluids in the following ways:

- Sip small amounts of water.
- Drink carbohydrate/electrolyte-containing drinks. Good choices are sports drinks such as Gatorade or prepared replacement solutions (Pedialyte is one example).
- Suck on popsicles made from juices and sports drinks.
- Suck on ice chips.
- Sip through a straw (works well for someone who has had jaw surgery or mouth sores).

Try to cool the person, if there has been heat exposure or if the person has an elevated temperature, in the following ways:

- Remove any excess clothing and loosen other clothing.
- Air-conditioned areas are best for helping return body temperatures to normal and break the heat exposure cycle.
- If air conditioning is not available, increase cooling by evaporation by placing the person near fans or in the shade, if outside. Place a wet towel around the person.
- If available, use a spray bottle or misters to spray luke-warm water on exposed skin surfaces to help with cooling by evaporation.
- Avoid exposing skin to excessive cold, such as ice packs or ice water. This can cause the blood vessels in the skin to constrict and will decrease rather than increase heat loss. Exposure to excessive cold can also cause shivering, which will increase body temperature -- the opposite effect you're trying to achieve.
Medical Treatment

Treatment in the emergency department centers first on restoring blood volume and then body fluids, while determining the cause of the dehydration. If your core body temperature is greater than 104°F, doctors will cool the entire body. They may promote cooling by evaporation with mists and fans or cooling blankets and baths.

- Fluid replacement
  - If there is no nausea and vomiting, fluid replacement is begun. You are asked to drink electrolyte/carbohydrate-containing fluids along with water.
  - If there are signs of significant dehydration (elevated resting heart rate, low blood pressure), fluids are generally given intravenously.

- Disposition
  - If your condition improves in the Emergency Department, you may be sent home, preferably in the care of friends or family.
  - If you remain dehydrated, confused, feverish, have persistently abnormal vital signs, or signs of infection, you may need to stay in the hospital for additional treatment.

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- Outlook


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