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Fact Sheet: Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body loses more fluid than it takes in. Dehydration can disrupt metabolic processes and normal body functions. Lack of sufficient water during strenuous outdoor activities can result in dehydration.

Symptoms

- Excessive thirst
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Passing less urine than normal (urine dark or cloudy)
- Dryness of skin, mouth and eyes
- Loss of skin elasticity

Severe Symptoms

- Passing no urine in > 12 hours
- Fever
- Heart palpitations or rapid heartbeat
- Fainting
- Confusion/disorientation
- Seizures
- Shock

When to see a Doctor

- Diarrhea for 24 hours or more
- Irritable or disoriented and much sleepier or less active than usual
- Can't keep down fluids
- Bloody or black stool

Prevention

- The amount of water you need to avoid dehydration will vary based on climate and physical exertion.
- Consume at least 1 liter per hour of activity, increase if you experience any symptoms of dehydration.
- Take frequent water breaks, every 15 minutes, particularly when performing strenuous activity. Do not wait until you are thirsty to take a water break.

First Aid Treatment

- Treating mild/moderate dehydration can be done by stopping activity, getting the patient to a cool/shaded area, and introducing fluids (water, broths, or electrolyte containing sports drinks) orally.
- Be cautious of electrolyte imbalances due to increased water intake.
 - Incorporate electrolyte drinks or oral rehydration salts to your rehydration regime.
- If the patient displays severe symptoms, or is unable to keep fluids down, emergency medical attention is required.

References and Additional Resources

- Mayo Clinic [Dehydration](#)
- Cleveland Clinic [Electrolyte Imbalance](#)
- Adapted from *Dehydration Fact Sheet*, by University of Maryland: Department of Environmental Safety, Sustainability & Risk (<https://essr.umd.edu/about/research-safety/field-research-safety/planning>) with permission.