

A guide for patients about healthy hydration

Fluid is essential for life, without fluids we would only survive a few days. It plays a critical role in all of our body functions. We all need to replace fluid lost through breathing, sweat and flushing out waste products. This leaflet gives information about meeting your fluid needs.

Why are fluids important?

The following are just some of the functions that water is involved in:

- Prevention of pressure sores or ulcers and skin elasticity and softness.
- Removing waste products and toxins through the kidneys.
- Prevention of urinary tract infections.
- Brain function and concentration.
- Blood pressure and heart health.
- Muscle and joint movement.
- Allowing your medications to work effectively.
- Preventing falls - dehydration can increase dizziness and make you feel faint.
- During a heat wave or hot weather, dehydration can also lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

What are the signs of dehydration?

- When you feel thirsty your body is telling you that you are becoming dehydrated. As we get older the thirst mechanism is reduced, which means we may not feel thirsty as often. It is important to drink, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- The simplest way to know if you are drinking enough is to check the colour of your urine. Your urine should be pale or straw coloured. The darker your urine the more likely it is you need to increase your fluid intake. If you are in doubt, check it compared to our guide below.

Healthy wee is one to three... four to eight and it's time to hydrate!

How much fluid do we need?

Most of us need between 1.5 and 2.5 litres of fluid a day which is the same as six to eight cups a day. However, extra fluid will be needed when sweating more, for example, through heavy work, exercise or in hot weather.

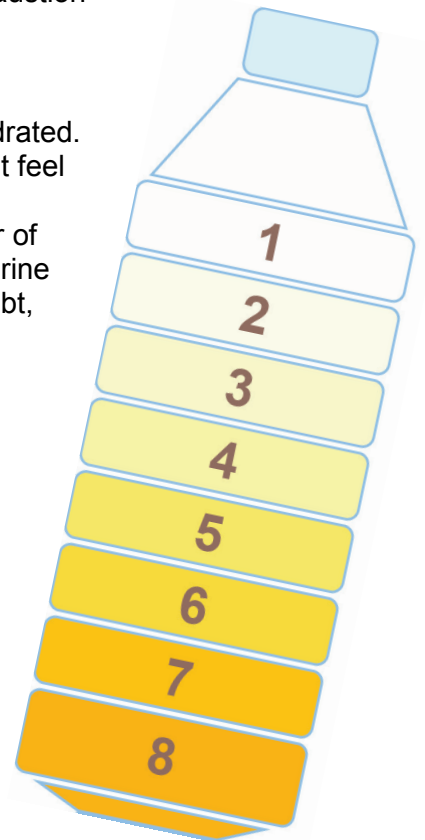
Which fluids could I drink?

Fluid is not just about water, you can also choose other drinks that you enjoy. These can include tea, coffee, milky drinks, fizzy drinks, fruit juice, squash and fruit tea.

Fruit juice and fizzy drinks contain sugar, if you have diabetes please check with your healthcare professional about using these drinks.

What about caffeine?

Tea and coffee can count towards your daily fluid needs. Tea and coffee contain caffeine, which is known to have a diuretic effect (increases the amount of urine produced), however this effect is very small.



Nourishing drinks

If you are underweight or have lost a lot of weight recently, nourishing drinks can help you get enough nourishment to prevent any further unwanted weight loss. If you have concerns speak to your healthcare professional.

These could include:

- full fat milk, milkshakes, smoothies or flavoured milk
- hot milky drinks, such as milky tea and coffee, hot chocolate and Ovaltine or Horlicks.

Tips to maintain hydration

- Try to have a drink at regular intervals throughout the day. If you cannot manage large amounts, try to have small sips throughout the day instead. Keep a drink close by to remind yourself to drink regularly and to keep track on how much you are managing.
- You could try using a straw in your glass or a sports bottle cap on your bottle of fluid.
- If you have difficulty preparing drinks for yourself, ask your carers to leave drinks beside you or somewhere you can easily access them.
- Foods can contribute to your fluid intake also, such as ice lollies, soup, stews, yoghurts and jelly. Some fruits and vegetables, such as melon, tomatoes and cucumber, are also good sources of fluid.
- If you feel thirsty all the time it could be that you have a health condition such as diabetes. Please check with your doctor if you are concerned.
- If you have problems swallowing liquids or are coughing whilst eating or drinking please speak to your healthcare professional.

Contact the Community Nutrition Service (CNS)


Address Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital Unit 2 Whitfield Court
King Edward Avenue Honeywood Close
Herne Bay Whitecliffs Business Park
CT6 6EB Dover
CT16 3NY

Phone 01227 594836 01304 828755

Email kcht.communitynutritionservice@nhs.net

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Customer Care Team

If you have a query about our health services, or would like to comment, compliment or complain about Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, you can contact the **Customer Care Team**.

Phone: 0300 123 1807, 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
Please ask if you would like the team to call you back
Text: 07943 091958 **Email:** kcht.cct@nhs.net

Address: Customer Care Team, Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, Trinity House, 110-120 Upper Pemberton, Eureka Park, Ashford, Kent TN25 4AZ **Web:** www.kentcht.nhs.uk

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You will be asked for your agreement to treatment and, if necessary, your permission to share your personal information.

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