What You Need to Know About Diabetes and Dehydration

by PATRICIA BRATIANU

Diabetes and Dehydration: The Importance of Keeping Hydrated

Dehydration is unhealthy for everyone, but if you have diabetes it can be particularly serious.

Dehydration can cause your blood sugar to rise and it stresses your kidneys, which are already at risk of injury due to your diabetes.

Dehydration due to fluid loss makes your body lose electrolytes, which can put you at risk for cardiac arrhythmias and other serious health problems. Additionally, this potential life-threatening diabetic complication hyperosmolar hyperglycemic state is a result of a massive fluid loss.

Let’s take look at how what dehydration is, its causes, and what steps you can take to prevent dehydration and its complications from happening to you.

Signs and Symptoms of Dehydration

Here are some steps that you can take to evaluate yourself or others for signs of dehydration.

- The first sign of dehydration is a feeling of thirst. If you feel thirsty, drink some water. However, if dehydration is serious or prolonged, the sensation of thirst may disappear.
- Your skin may be thin, dry, and itchy. If you pinch up a small amount of skin it may stay elevated for several seconds like a tent. You may develop cracks at the corners of your mouth and your lips may be dry.
- Your eyes may appear sunken.
- You may urinate less often than usual, and your urine will look darker than it normally does.
- If you are monitoring a baby for signs of dehydration, pay special attention to the number and frequency of wet diapers that the child produces. This is an excellent way to assess dehydration in infants and toddlers.
- Do you feel sleepy? You may be very tired if you get dehydrated.
- Signs of severe dehydration include confusion and loss of consciousness. Elderly people are particularly prone to confusion when dehydration is present.

If you believe that you or another person is dehydrated, take steps to reverse the condition. Seek expert medical advice promptly.

What Causes Dehydration?

The most common cause of dehydration is simply not drinking enough. Some people are slightly dehydrated a lot of the time because they don’t drink enough fluids.

How much is enough? Each day you should drink as many ounces as half of your body weight in pounds. For

example, if you weigh 200 pounds, drink at least 100 ounces of fluids each day.

Some other causes of dehydration include…

Fluid Restriction

Some diabetics are on fluid restrictions due to kidney, heart, or lung disease. If you have any of these conditions, ask your health care provider to recommend the amount of fluid you should consume. You have a higher risk of suffering from dehydration if you are on a fluid restriction.

Extreme Weather, Exercise

You can also become dehydrated if you are outside in windy or hot conditions. Consume extra fluids if you are exposed to these conditions for extended periods of time. Prolonged, vigorous exercise will predispose you to dehydration as well if you don't drink extra fluids before, during and after engaging in the activity.

Sickness

Dehydration may occur if you run a high fever or are ill. If you are vomiting or have diarrhea, you will lose an excessive amount of fluids, while bleeding and frequent urination can disturb your body's natural fluid balance. Contact your health care provider if you think that you are dehydrated or if you have diarrhea or vomiting that lasts for more than six hours.

Medications

Some medications increase the likelihood of you becoming dehydrated. Anti-anxiety medications and diuretics are among the many types of drugs that can cause excess fluid loss.

Antihistamine and other medications used to treat upper respiratory tract infections may cause you to become dehydrated. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to recommend over-the-counter medications that are safe for diabetics.

Some Drinks

Some liquids cause dehydration. Coffee and alcoholic beverages act as diuretics. Limit your intake of these drinks.

Who Is Most at Risk?

Infants, young children and the elderly are particularly prone to dehydration. If you are older or provide care for very young or old people, take steps to prevent dehydration, and learn to recognize the signs of it.

Infants may develop serious dehydration within hours if they are ill with vomiting or diarrhea. Seek immediate medical assistance if you think that an infant child or elderly person is developing signs of dehydration.

When your blood sugar levels are extremely high, you may develop serious, life-threatening dehydration. If this occurs, you need immediate emergency medical treatment.

How is Dehydration Treated?

The first and most important step is to take measures to prevent dehydration. The primary treatment for reversing dehydration is a fluid replacement. The type and amount of fluids used for replacement depend on the underlying cause of the condition, its severity, and accompanying symptoms.

Simple dehydration is corrected by ingesting water or other sugar-free liquids. If you are ill and not taking in

enough calories, you may need to drink fluids that replace calories and electrolytes.

Serious dehydration requires intravenous fluid volume replacement if adequate amounts cannot be provided by mouth. Health care providers will determine what fluids to administer to you based on your symptoms, underlying health issues, and laboratory values. The severity of dehydration, your age, and body size will be considered.

The rate of administration will be customized to your specific needs and steps will be taken to ensure that you receive fluids at a rate that will correct the dehydration without stressing your heart, lungs, and kidneys.

Health care providers will also provide other treatments so that the underlying cause of the dehydration is corrected or eliminated. For example, you may need antibiotics if you are suffering from an infection. If your blood sugar is very high you will be given insulin. The insulin may be given as an injection, or intravenously.