

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Dehydration

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The hotter the weather gets, the greater toll it taken on your body, specifically your hydration levels. Staying hydrated in hot weather is just as important as staying cool. Our bodies are made primarily of water and many life sustaining organs such as the brain, muscles, and heart require a steady flow of water to maintain proper function.²

What is dehydration? Dehydration occurs when the loss of water exceeds the amount that is taken in and is often accompanied by disruption of the body's metabolic processes.¹ Anyone may become dehydrated, but young children, older adults, and people with chronic illnesses are most at risk.²

What are the causes of dehydration? Common causes of dehydration include vigorous exercise, long term exposure to hot weather, diarrhea, vomiting, fever, excessive sweating, and diseases such as diabetes.¹

What are the signs and symptoms of dehydration? Signs of dehydration include increased thirst, dry mouth, weakness, stupor, headache, dizziness, palpitations, confusion, fainting, inability to sweat, muscle cramps, abdominal pain, and decreased urine output.¹ These signs can appear slowly and can be mistaken for tiredness. Particularly in young children and older adults, drinking water should never be delayed because no symptoms of dehydration are evident.

How is dehydration treated? The best approach is prevention. Make sure to drink plenty of fluids, water being the best choice while out and about.² For those with diminished kidney function, be sure and discuss a target amount with your primary care provider. Mild to moderate dehydration can be reversed by drinking more fluids. Sports drinks are okay for most people, but pay careful attention to the amounts of Total Carbohydrate and Sodium. Energy drinks may contain ingredients that can make dehydration worse and should be avoided.

Severe dehydration needs immediate emergency attention and often requires the use of intravenous fluid replacement.²

What are the complications of dehydration? Dehydration can kill or disable a person. Heat exhaustion can be life-threatening, developing into heatstroke, seizures, kidney failure, low blood volume shock, coma, and death.²

When should medical care be sought? A dehydrated person should be taken to the nearest emergency department if the following symptoms occur: stupor, headache, seizures, difficulty breathing, chest and abdominal pains, fainting, or decreased urine output. Watch for these signs especially if a person suffers severe or prolonged vomiting, fever over 101 degrees Fahrenheit, or sudden short term weight loss.

References:

1. "Dehydration: MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia." U.S National Library of Medicine. Web. 23 May 2015. <<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000982.htm>>.
2. "Staying Hydrated - Staying Healthy." Staying Hydrated - Staying Healthy. Web. 23 May 2015. <http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/PhysicalActivity/FitnessBasics/Staying-Hydrated---Staying-Healthy_UCM_441180_Article.jsp>.

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.

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