

## **Dementia and Dehydration Can Be A Deadly Mix**

As we age, it becomes more difficult for our bodies to detect thirst, making dehydration a common problem for the elderly. Age and forgetfulness increase the risk of dehydration among individuals with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Because the symptoms of dehydration imitate the symptoms of dementia and Alzheimer's, its symptoms can be a fatal afterthought.

Dehydration occurs when the body is releasing more fluids than it is receiving. Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Increased thirst
- Decreased urine output
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Inability to sweat
- Sluggishness or tiredness
- Fainting and falling
- Intensified dementia/Alzheimer's symptoms

To stay hydrated, it is best to drink water, juice, or tea throughout the day. Caffeinated and alcoholic beverages should be avoided as they are dehydrating.

To help ensure an elderly loved one is drinking enough, make sure to pass the glass to him or her. A glass left sitting is likely to remain untouched. It is important to have someone monitor and offer your loved one water throughout the day.

Dementia patients have trouble remembering to drink enough water, and they also have difficulty communicating their needs. A loved one who is wandering aimlessly may not be aware of thirst. A glass of water or juice may help settle the patient and clear his or her head.

If you or a caregiver suspects your loved one is severely dehydrated, call 9-1-1 immediately.