



Water and Healthy Ageing Hydration Best Practice Toolkit for Care Homes

6 Practical tips for encouraging water consumption

- 1.** Start by encouraging your team to develop a policy on how you will provide water for your residents.
- 2.** To remind carers to encourage water intake for those at higher risk, hang a picture of a drop of water in kitchens and near residents' beds.
- 3.** Older people may need to be reminded, encouraged and even convinced to drink more water. Using a positive approach often helps. "Here is some nice cool refreshing water for you" is often more productive than "Do you want something to drink?"
- 4.** Water is best served fresh and cool – not left in open jugs.
- 5.** Many people prefer to drink 'little and often'. Try to offer water at mealtimes and between meals.
- 6.** Those in care tend to drink all the water in their glass when they are swallowing their tablets. Offering slightly larger volumes of water at this time encourages them to drink more.
- 7.** Serve small quantities of water alongside coffee and tea and explain why it would be beneficial to drink more water.
- 8.** Residents often worry about increased toilet visits in the night, so avoid late evening drinks. Encourage water consumption from when residents wake in the morning.
- 9.** Older people can lose their thirst response and their taste sensation. Never take it for granted that they will know when they need to drink.
- 10.** Where possible, inform families and friends about the importance of promoting hydration when they visit. They can help in meeting that important hydration target.

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- 11.** For trips and for use in outside areas, providing residents with a personal water bottle can help. These are easy to carry, to clean and to refill, and can be marked clearly with the resident's name.
- 12.** During activities or group events, try serving glasses of cool water with slices of lemon and ice cubes at each resident's table place when they begin. Make sure you keep refilling their glasses as the event goes on, so they can drink little and often. By providing citrus fruit with water, you are also helping the consumption of Vitamin C.
- 13.** Hot water with a piece of fruit – such as lemon, lime or orange – can appeal to those who want a hot drink.
- 14.** Encourage residents to participate in growing fresh mint, lemon verbena and lemon balm in the garden, if possible. Add sprigs – freshly bruised – to a pot of hot water or to jugs of cold water. It makes a fresh-tasting drink and has an appetising aroma.
- 15.** As the weather gets warmer, increase the availability of drinking water and encourage residents to drink more. Older people perspire more in warmer weather.
- 16.** Offer water and fluids at all mealtimes. Make sure that those who are less able can choose to drink.
- 17.** In the dining room, use different coloured napkins for those who are at specific risk and need their water intake monitored. Make sure that all staff are aware of the colour used.
- 18.** Have fun when explaining why water is good for you. Encourage local primary schools to come in and present the health benefits of drinking water to residents and staff. Water is now a central part of the government's Healthy Schools programme.
- 19.** Think of an easy counting system to help those with mild memory problems, confusion or dementia to consume enough water.
- 20.** Persevere! Helping people to recognise and choose healthy options will take time and patience.

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