



Water and Healthy Ageing Hydration Best Practice Toolkit for Care Homes

Wise up on water in your care home

Statements from health and hydration professionals

“We now have the clearest evidence that water is a health drink of real power. Yet standards for care homes for older people still don’t mention water being freely available, and in many environments, residents and staff still suffer from a lack of facilities. Water UK believes that everyone, whatever their wealth, whatever their status, should have access to fresh water and the health information to allow them to choose good hydration. By providing healthy choices, and by acting on that awareness, older people in care will be able to benefit from one of the simplest and most effective supports of good health – high quality drinking water.”

Pamela Taylor, Chief Executive, Water UK

“Drinking sufficient water is vitally important for older people and the health benefits are well documented. In some care settings it can be hard to encourage older people to drink. Through this toolkit, the Royal Society wishes to ensure that all carers have access to water policy guidance and that older people get the right health messages about drinking enough water.”

Paul Madgwick, Chairman, Royal Society for the Promotion of Health

“Dehydration is particularly dangerous to elderly people. Symptoms arise suddenly and the consequences can be fatal. Improving access to drinking water in care homes is a simple and effective health promotion measure, requiring a change of approach rather than additional investment. It would improve the quality of life for residents – and reduce the costs of healthcare. Therefore, the Royal Institute of Public Health fully supports this Water UK initiative.”

Jack Jeffery, Chairman, Royal Institute of Public Health

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“Providing older people in care with fresh drinking water throughout the day is a practical and common sense way of improving health and well being. The benefits of drinking fresh water are clear and make good economic sense. By adopting hydration best practice and the principles of the toolkit, carers can promote and enrich the standards of catering within the care sector.”

Sue Hawkins, Chairman, National Association of Care Catering

“Evidence is available of the positive impact that good hydration can have on general health, well being and quality of life. The best practice toolkit will be useful to all care homes in improving their care provision.”

Virginia Storey, Senior Nursing Adviser, The Commission for Social Care Inspection

“We always have to remember that water is a terribly important part of nutrition. If you don't maintain a wholesome diet and keep your body strength as you get older, it can lead to long term immobility, weakness, frailty and indeed death. We in the care industry have a responsibility to look after people from the point of view of making sure they get adequate water. I am assured that the national minimum standards for care homes will soon ensure that fresh drinking water must be available at all times to residents in addition to the other hot and cold drinks. In the meantime, this practical Toolkit will help carers to develop best hydration practice their homes, improve well being and provide healthy choices.”

Baroness Sally Greengross OBE

“It is vital to recognise the importance of hydration, especially in older people, and also encourage care homes to supply fresh tap water. Fresh tap water has been proven to be cost effective as it can diminish and reduce common ailments. The best practice toolkit is an excellent guide for care home staff and a good way of introducing best practice which negates the need for new standards.”

Martin Green, Chief Executive, English Community Care Association

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“For all care organisations, it is important to understand the profound effect that poor hydration can have on older people. Water UK’s toolkit explains that urinary tract infections, pressure sores, confusion, dizziness, falls, constipation, headaches and certain cancers can all be positively affected through drinking the right amounts of water. Tap water is inexpensive and available in every home. By care homes creating hydration strategies, and then positively encouraging and reminding residents to drink more, carers can have a profound effect on residents quality of life. As such an important part of a wholesome diet, giving any resident a lack of access to fresh, clean water is simply neglect. I feel passionately that care standards should ensure that free, fresh drinking water is available to residents throughout the day and insist that it is offered regularly. In the meantime, this toolkit will give carers the advice to provide more drinking water, and ensure that older persons are protected from water related malnutrition and dehydration.”

Gary Fitzgerald, Chief Executive, Action on Elder Abuse

“Water is a key nutrient for the body, and has a significant role to play in keeping older people healthy. It can help to prevent bladder and bowel problems, kidney stones and certain cancers. This toolkit will provide practical ways for carers to implement good hydration practice. We know that a sanctimonious approach rarely works, and simply preaching at older people to drink will give limited rewards. There is no point in just saying ‘you must drink more water’, older people will need fresh water made available for them throughout the day, they will need the help of carers to explain the health benefits, and encouragement and even reminders to drink more water.”

Dr Ian Banks - GP, BMA Council Member

“Sufficient fluid intake in the form of water is an essential component of a person-centred approach to the care of the older people, and must be a prominent feature in maintaining well being. As a company, we pride ourselves on providing the highest quality care for our residents. This best practice toolkit is a helpful and practical way of encouraging water consumption and awareness of the contraindications of poor hydration.”

David Parry, Director of Care & Development, Quantum Care Homes

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“Water UK and its partners have succeeded in producing a simple best practice toolkit. It will be useful in all care homes for older people as it will help raise awareness to the benefits of good hydration and thereby help carers maintain the well-being of residents.”

Julian Haywood Principal Officer Resources Social Services Dept, Leicestershire County Council

“Providing older people with a wholesome diet and appropriate, well presented health information can make a significant contribution to caring and inclusive societies. Many of the fluids that people are offered contain high levels of sugar, artificial additives, caffeine and other diuretics. Drinking enough clear, fresh, cool water can assist in the prevention of a range of health problems, and this toolkit will directly assist in promoting hydration best practice and general wellbeing”.

Rachel Flowers - Assistant Director of Public Health, Milton Keynes PCT