For further information or help with any stoma questions contact your STN or visit www.stomaltherapy.com and click on “Find a STN”

Disclaimer  The information in this brochure:
- has been developed as a general guide only
- relates to adults only
Any concerns need to be discussed with your STN or doctor.


Prepared by the Australian Association of Stomal Therapy Nurses Inc. Education and Professional Development Subcommittee www.stomaltherapy.com

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Normal hydration

We lose water every day from our body when we breathe, sweat or vomit, as well as urine and faeces. This fluid is normally replaced with what we eat and drink.

What is dehydration?

Dehydration is the loss of more fluid from our body than the amount taken in, along with some essential salts.

Prevention of dehydration

- Be aware in hot climates that dehydration is more likely to occur
- Caution when exercising in high temperatures which will increase sweating
- Know the normal output for your stoma. If your stoma output becomes more watery and you find you need to empty your pouch more frequently you are at increased risk
- Plan ahead on a daily basis: listen to the weather forecast, carry suitable fluids to drink and ensure further fluids can be accessed throughout the day
- Fluids can also be obtained from eating ice lollies (icy poles), frozen drinks and sucking ice
- Fluids such as alcohol, coffee, tea and soft drinks can contribute to dehydration
- Avoid alcohol if you are at risk of dehydration
- A small supply of sports drinks as a backup may be a useful precaution eg Gastrolyte, Gatorade, Lucozade, or Powerade as they contain electrolytes

How do you know if you are dehydrated?

You may feel some or all of the following:

- Headache
- Increased thirst
- Dry lips, mouth or tongue
- Reduced urine or dark coloured urine
- Dizziness
- Cramps
- Nausea
- Palpitations
- Lethargy / weakness

What do you do if you think you are dehydrated?

Drink fluids that can replace the lost fluids and salts. These are called rehydration solutions or electrolyte replacement drinks*. You can get these on prescription, the supermarket or you can make them at home.

*Rehydration solutions may not be suitable for you if you have ongoing health problems such as diabetes, kidney or heart problems. Seek advice from your health care provider.

Homemade rehydration drink

Mix together:

- 1 litre of water
- 6 level teaspoons of sugar / glucose powder (reduce if diabetic)
- ½ level teaspoon of salt
- ½ level teaspoon soda bicarbonate
- Cordial / fruit drink to flavour

Drink sips of rehydration fluid every 5 minutes until urine is clear and pale. Make one litre and store in the fridge for 24 hours, then discard.

What do you do if your symptoms do not improve?

Contact a health professional such as your Stomal Therapy Nurse (STN), GP or go directly to the Emergency Department if symptoms are severe or don’t improve within an hour.