



# Health Matters Assistance Programme



## Dehydration

Water makes up around 70 per cent of the human body. It's important for digestion, joint function, healthy skin and removal of waste products.

Dehydration occurs when more fluid is lost from the body than is taken in. This causes an imbalance in important minerals, such as sodium and potassium, which are required for muscle and nerve function.

If there is a one per cent or greater loss in body weight because of fluid loss, dehydration occurs. This may be mild, moderate or severe, depending on the amount lost.

### **In mild to moderate dehydration, other possible symptoms include:**

- Dry mouth, eyes and lips
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Decreased urine output
- Muscle weakness

### **When dehydration is more severe, a person may experience:**

- Extreme thirst
- Very dry mouth and eyes
- Loss of elasticity in the skin, making it look shrivelled
- Passing small amounts of dark, concentrated urine
- Sunken eyes
- Lack of sweating
- Fast heartbeat

In addition, blood pressure may be low, and delirium and loss of consciousness may occur.

Mild dehydration is easily treated by drinking water and other fluids, such as diluted fruit juice. For the ideal replacement of fluid and minerals, particularly when vomiting and diarrhoea are making fluid consumption difficult, rehydration treatments are available from the pharmacist.

You may also find information on the HMAP Secure Website:

[www.hmap-online.co.uk](http://www.hmap-online.co.uk)

If you wish to discuss in confidence any concerns relating to this article or indeed any other concern, you can do so by calling:

**Freephone: 0800 083 7545**

*Just some of the issues covered...*

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