

# Hydration and Dementia: Why Hydration Is So Important

Hydration challenges are common in individuals with cognitive impairment, as the brain's thirst signal may weaken and memory changes can affect recognizing or using a cup. Fear of incontinence and visual-spatial difficulties may also lead to avoiding fluids. Even mild dehydration can increase confusion, agitation, fatigue, dizziness, and the risk of falls. Here are some helpful tips to support adequate fluid intake.

## Environment

- Reduce distractions
- Keep a favorite cup or water bottle within reach and visible
- In late stage, ensure upright positioning and unhurried time

## Approach & Communication

- Use guiding statements, "Let's have something to drink."
- Pair drinks with routine activities
  - After brushing teeth, with medications, during TV time
- Model drinking - take a sip together.
- Offer small amounts more frequently
- Avoid arguing if they decline - wait and try again later.

## Specialty Hydration Options

- Jelly Drops - colorful, bite-sized, high-water treats designed specifically for people with dementia.
- Hydration gummies or electrolyte gummies.
- Flavored electrolyte beverages (low sugar when possible).

## Water-Rich Foods

**Sometimes drinking isn't the easiest way to hydrate. Foods can help!**

- Fruits: Watermelon, Strawberries, Oranges, Grapes, Pineapple, Cantaloupe and Peaches
- Vegetables: Cucumber, Celery, Lettuce, Tomatoes and Zucchini
- Other Hydrating Options: Yogurt, Smoothies, Popsicles (homemade ones with Pedialyte!), Broth-based soups, Gelatin, and Applesauce

## Helpful Cues

- Phone reminders or written notes.
- Pre-filled water bottle at bedside.
- Set "hydration check-in" times.

**Offer without pressure.  
Encourage without arguing.  
Try again later.**

***Every Sip Counts***



Dementia Life