

# Cancer Therapy: Managing Side Effects - Dehydration

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Dehydration can happen when your body loses too much fluid in a short amount of time. Certain side effects of cancer treatment, such as vomiting or diarrhea can cause dehydration. Dehydration may also be caused by an infection, high fever, bleeding or not drinking enough fluid.

## Early Signs of Dehydration

- Dry mouth
- Thick saliva
- Loose, crinkled skin that may stand up like a tent when pinched
- Decreased need to urinate
- Urine that looks dark in color or cloudy

## Tips to Prevent Dehydration during Cancer Treatment

The best way to manage treatment-related dehydration is to take steps to prevent it. It is important to look for early signs of dehydration and to increase the amount of fluid you drink.

- **Drink 12 cups of fluid each day.** Fluids may include water, juice, lemonade, clear fruit drinks, sport drinks and decaffeinated coffee or tea.
  - ▶ Keep track of the amount of fluid you drink.
  - ▶ If you are unable to keep fluids down, it may help to take small sips of fluid or suck on small pieces of ice during the day.
  - ▶ **Do not** drink alcohol or caffeine. These can make dehydration worse.

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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

- **If you have vomiting or diarrhea**, keep track of how often you vomit or have diarrhea. It is important to talk with your health care team about what medicines to use to manage these problems at home. Drink extra fluids during the day until these problems improve.

## When to Call Your Doctor

### Call your doctor if you have any of the following:

- A fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher

**A fever can be life threatening if not treated. Your doctor may ask you to go to the hospital.**

- Unable to keep liquids down for more than 24 hours
- Diarrhea more than 4 times a day or for more than 1 to 2 days
- Blood in your vomit or stool
- Swollen abdomen (belly) or abdominal pain
- Weakness, dizziness or fatigue
- New or worsening confusion or drowsiness
- Little or no urine output

## More Information and Resources

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions. For more information, ask for these patient education handouts:

- Eating Tips for Managing Cancer Treatment Side Effects
- Fight Cancer-Related Fatigue with Good Nutrition
- Using Exercise to Fight Cancer-Related Fatigue
- Cancer Survivorship
- Cancer Internet Resources
- Nutrition Internet Resources
- Patient and Family Resource Center
- JamesCare for Life

**Go to this video link: <http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos> to learn more about your cancer diagnosis, treatment and care.**