

IPC Advice Bulletin for Care Homes

Issue No. 02 – October 2016

To support Care Home staff, here is some information on good infection prevention and control (IPC) practice.

Preventing dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body loses more fluid than it takes in. It is particularly common in older people due to:

- **Medications** - some medications have a diuretic effect while others can cause increased sweating
- **Decreased thirst** - a person's thirst can lessen with age
- **Mobility problems** - or reliance on others to provide drinks can result in insufficient fluid intake
- **Memory problems** - without prompting some people forget to drink enough fluids
- **Reluctance to drink** - many older people are reluctant to drink to avoid the need to go to the toilet
- **Decreased kidney function** - as our bodies age they lose kidney function and we are less able to conserve fluid.



Diarrhoea and vomiting (D&V) can quickly cause dehydration in the elderly!

Recognising the signs can help prevent serious illness and admission to hospital!

Mild to moderate symptoms

- Feeling thirsty and lightheaded
- Dry mouth
- Tiredness
- Dark coloured, strong smelling urine
- Passing urine less often than usual
- Dry skin
- Headache
- Constipation

Severe symptoms

- Irritability/confusion
- Little or no urine
- Weak rapid pulse
- Low blood pressure
- Fast breathing
- Dry mouth and tongue
- No sweat or tears



To prevent dehydration, particularly if you have an outbreak of D&V, ensure all service users have regular drinks as they often do not feel thirsty and may not ask!

Resources available at:

www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk