

# Preventing Dehydration

The most critical part of caring for a person with influenza is ensuring that they receive enough fluids every day to prevent dehydration. Dehydration happens when a person loses more fluids than they take in by drinking. This can occur through fever, sweating, vomiting and/or diarrhea. Dehydration can be deadly if not treated.

## Symptoms of Dehydration:

- Thirst (often an early sign of dehydration)
- Flushed face
- Dry mouth
- Rapid and deep breathing
- Fast and/or weak pulse
- Sunken, tearless eyes
- Dry, warm skin
- Little or no urine output
- Dark-colored urine
- Dizziness made worse when standing
- Rapid increase in heartbeat upon rising to a sitting or standing position
- Cramping in the arms and legs
- Sleepiness or irritability
- Headache
- Lack of elasticity of the skin (when the skin is pulled up, it takes longer than usual to go back to its normal position)
- In infants, sunken fontanel ("soft spot" on top of head)
- Decreased alertness or change in consciousness



## Prevent Dehydration

Adults need at least 2-3 quarts of fluids per day (1 quart per day for young children).

- Give clear liquids such as broth, juice (half-strength for children), tea, sports drinks, or oral rehydration formula\*\*.
- Large amounts of caffeine can increase urine output; limit caffeinated drinks to 1-3 cups per day.
- Give cool drinks if the ill person has a fever.
- Food intake is not critical while the person is most ill, but fluid intake is.

**The ill person may not want to or may be unable to take fluids. You must help them; do not stop trying!**

Give fluids — one drop at a time if necessary. Start with one teaspoon of fluid every 5 minutes. If they do not vomit after 30 minutes, give two teaspoons. Continue to double the volume every 30 minutes until they can take fluids on their own.

## Be prepared! Keep these items on hand:

- Table salt and sugar
- Fluids: broth, juice, tea, sports drinks, etc
- Fever medication: Acetaminophen\* (Tylenol®) and Ibuprofen\* (Motrin®)
- Loperimide\* (Imodium) or similar anti-diarrheal medication
- Medications (anti-emetics-prescription or over-the-counter) to stop vomiting
- Thermometer
- Automated blood pressure monitor (optional).
- Household disinfectant for cleaning
- Bleach

### \*\*Oral rehydration formula

- 4 cups water
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons sugar or honey (honey should not be given to infants less than 1 year of age)

Mix together. Add lemon, lime or mint for flavor, if desired.

*\*Follow medication package instructions for dosages and times between doses.*