

Signs and Symptoms of Dehydration in Children

Being well hydrated is important to both physical and mental health. Dehydration can make a child tired, cranky, and stiff-jointed. Being dehydrated can cause headaches, nausea, body aches, and cramps, and can make it more difficult for children to be patient with other children and with their parents, too.

If a child says he or she is thirsty, don't make the child wait for a beverage, as thirst can be a signal that dehydration has already begun. Here are the signs and symptoms of dehydration:

Mild Dehydration

- Thirst
- Dry lips
- Dry mouth
- Flushed skin
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Headache
- Urine begins to darken in color
- Urine output decreases

Moderate Dehydration (call a medical professional)

All of the signs of mild dehydration, plus:

- Skin doesn't bounce back quickly when pressed
- Very dry mouth
- Sunken eyes
- Output of urine will be limited and color of urine will be dark yellow
- Cramps
- Stiff and/or painful joints
- Severe irritability
- Fatigue
- Severe headache

Severe Dehydration (call emergency number)

All of the signs of mild and moderate dehydration, plus:

- Blue lips
- Blotchy skin
- Confusion
- Lethargy
- Cold hands and feet
- Rapid breathing
- Rapid and weak pulse
- Low blood pressure
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- High fever
- Inability to urinate or produce tears
- Disinterest in drinking fluid

