

## Long-Term Care Survey Alert

### Clinical Care: Read The Early Signs Of Dehydration Before It's Too Late

**Think dehydration anytime a resident has these symptoms.**

Hindsight is 20/20, especially if you're a surveyor looking at the medical record of a resident hospitalized for dehydration to see if staff could have intervened earlier.

And sudden onset of a fall or a sudden increase in the signs of dementia may be just the red flag that catches a record reviewer's eye.

Keep dehydration in mind when a person has those conditions, advises **Joan Johnson**, a licensed dietitian at **Heritage Enterprises**, in Bloomington, IL.

Or the person's blood pressure may be lower than baseline, she adds. In such cases, put together the big picture by looking at the person's dietary and fluid intake, she suggests.

Concentrated urine is another early sign of low hydration, says **Janet Mentes, RN, PhD**, "although that can be hard to detect if the person is incontinent."

To look for poor hydration, check the resident's mouth during mouth care or feeding assistance, suggests Mentes, a nursing professor at the **University of California at Los Angeles**.

"If the person has a wrinkled or furrowed tongue -- and that's something new --the person could be dehydrated, says Mentes. But check to see if he is taking a medication that could cause dry mouth, she cautions.

Editor's note: For a free copy of a set of stories on dehydration in MDS Alert, please e-mail your request to the editor at [EditorMON@aol.com](mailto:EditorMON@aol.com).