

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Clip And Save: Are Your Residents Drinking Enough Fluids?

Here are 15 cool ways to ensure they do.

An ounce of prevention goes a long way in preventing dehydration in elderly residents. The **Illinois Council on Long-Term Care** offers nursing homes the following suggestions:

1. Consider giving residents water bottles (such as those used by athletes) to carry with them around the facility. Fill the residents' water bottles with their favorite cool beverages.
2. Sponsor a cocktail hour for residents to enjoy their favorite beverages and socialize. Provide a bar with different bottles and attractive colors where residents can come up and order their drinks.
3. Teach staff to use a direct, positive approach when administering fluids. Say, "Here is some cool, refreshing water for you, Mrs. Jones."
4. Make colorful and inexpensive "props" for drinks, such as lemonade pitchers and glasses, cocktail decorations, or a fruit garnish.
5. During activities, use a blender to mix juice combinations for the residents to enjoy such as kiwi and strawberry; vanilla and root beer soda; ginger ale in cranberry juice; and orange and pineapple juice.
6. Develop a "juice bar" with a variety of juices, Italian ices, and snow cones.
7. Ask surveyors if they will offer something to drink to residents they interview during the survey, as part of the overall facility efforts to prevent dehydration.
8. Make sure water fountains in the facility are low enough that residents in wheelchairs can use them. Include a cup dispenser and wastebasket next to the drinking fountain. Purchase adaptive "handles" to make dispensing easier.
9. Decorate a cart and stock it with a variety of juices and water when making room visits. Begin the visit by sharing a beverage of choice. In many instances this will trigger fond memories of going to the soda fountain for a cherry cola or sipping lemonade at a church picnic.
10. Hand out water bottles during field trips and check them periodically to see who needs a refill or isn't drinking.
11. If residents refuse to drink during field trips, give them a salty snack (unless contraindicated), which will increase their natural thirst.
12. Use specific beverages as part of a reminiscing group. For example, have the group squeeze lemons and make lemonade. You'll be surprised at the many stories connected with this simple beverage.
13. Have a "taste-test" and have the residents guess the flavor of the juice, soft drink, tea, coffee, shake, etc., they are drinking.
14. Provide a liquid "aperitif" as residents wait for the dining room to open, such as tomato juice, orange juice, V-8 juice, etc.
15. Hold a regular cooking group and provide glasses of water with floating slices of lemon and ice cubes at each resident's place when the activity begins. Keep refilling residents' glasses as they prepare the meal and eat it.

Source: Illinois Council on Long-Term Care. Excerpted from an article written for a council newsletter by **Kevin Kavanaugh**, director of public affairs. Used by permission.