

# Are You Getting Enough Fluids?

## Tips for Adequate Hydration



Adequate nutrition is necessary to maintain a healthy body weight and the highest possible level of function. Adequate fluid intake is especially important.

### Why is adequate hydration important?

Dehydration can cause symptoms that make managing your ALS more difficult. Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Increased thirst
- Dry skin
- Darker urine color
- Poor appetite
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Mild confusion
- Thicker phlegm in the back of your throat.

Dehydration also makes secretions in your airways thicker, making breathing more difficult. A lack of adequate fluid is also the most common cause of constipation. All of these symptoms can make it harder for you to get enough nutrition and have enough energy for your day.

It is important to watch for these symptoms of dehydration.

More important, *aim to prevent dehydration before it happens.*

### Why can it be hard to get enough fluids?

There can be many challenges to getting enough fluids.

- Poor appetite can reduce your interest in eating and drinking.
- If ALS has affected your mobility, you may find that you intentionally avoid drinking to avoid using the restroom as frequently.
- Similarly, you may be trying to avoid the "burden" of using the restroom if you require a caregiver to assist you or if you need someone to help you with eating your meals.

- If it is hard for you to feed yourself, reaching for a beverage may be challenging.
- If ALS has affected your swallowing muscles, coughing or sputtering on beverages may keep you from drinking enough.

However, the benefits of good hydration are very important. The better hydrated you are, the better your energy and endurance level. Your ALS Center team can help give you tools for managing these challenges to good hydration.

### **How much fluid do I need each day?**

We need about eight (8 ounce) glasses of fluid daily for proper hydration and body function. Fluids include:

- Water
- Fruit juice
- Vegetable juice
- Milk
- Ice cream
- Jello
- Caffeine-free coffee, tea, and soda
- Supplements (Ensure, Boost, Instant Breakfast)
- Fruit smoothies and milkshakes

**\* Tip:** Help keep track of your fluid intake by measuring out your daily fluids and storing in a pitcher, thermos, or plastic bottle. This can help serve as a visual reminder of how much fluid you need to drink for the day!

### **Why should I limit caffeine and alcohol?**

Both caffeine and alcohol are natural diuretics. Diuretics take extra water from your body to form more urine. Therefore, diuretics act as "dehydrators." Try to limit beverages containing caffeine or alcohol so you will insure adequate fluid hydration. And remember that beverages containing caffeine or alcohol do NOT count towards your "8 glasses a day."