

Hydration Risks

The people who are most likely to experience dehydration probably aren't the ones rushing out to buy the latest hydration drink to hit the shelves: older adults. One study from 2023 showed that a quarter of over 65s have low-intake dehydration due to consuming insufficient fluid each day. This has been linked to a range of common health problems, from impaired cognition to urinary tract infections.



Older people are more vulnerable to dehydration

One of the reasons why older people are more vulnerable to dehydration is linked to the thirst reflex. It has long been known that the sensation of thirst steadily deteriorates as we age. On top of this, some medications can encourage fluid loss, and many older adults actively choose to drink less due to worries about accessing a toilet or incontinence, says Lee Hooper at the University of East Anglia in the UK.

"Older people also have smaller body water reserves, as body water is found in muscle which declines with age," she says. "They also concentrate urine less well, so they lose additional fluid when they go to the toilet, even when they haven't drunk enough."

To tackle this, Hooper believes that we need more public health messaging on the importance of staying hydrated with age, as well as better ways of detecting dehydration. One common recommendation has been to check the colour of your urine, as the darker the colour, the more dehydrated you are. However, given our kidneys are less able to concentrate urine as we age, this test may mistakenly suggest that you are adequately hydrated, says Hooper.

If you would like to see the original article that this was attached to, see <https://www.bushwalkingholidays.org/pdf/NS-Hydration.pdf>



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