

# Caring Connections Chronicle

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GENTLE  
REMINDER..  
Take Care  
of myself  
today!



## CARING FOR SENIORS

### Senior Dehydration: Its Dangers for Canada's Seniors and Ways to Prevent It



Dehydration is one of the most common preventable medical conditions in the world.

Water is vital to keep our bodies functioning properly. We lose about 68 ounces of water a day, mostly through perspiration, respiration, and urination. This water must be replaced to prevent excessive fluid loss, or dehydration.

#### Why is Water So Important for Seniors?

- It helps to control body temperature.
- Perspiration keeps us cool in hot weather and protects the body against heat exhaustion.
- Water helps the body to insulate itself against cold weather.
- It carries nutrients to body cells and carries away waste.
- Water promotes better digestion and intestinal function.
- It keeps the mouth, nose, eyes, and skin moist.
- Water ensures proper volume of blood.
- The urinary tract can be flushed out. This is important in reducing the risk of urinary tract infections. Urinary tract infections can be serious or fatal in seniors.
- **Dehydration can be life-threatening for Seniors**

Dehydration is one of the most frequent causes of hospitalization after age 65. Kidney function is less efficient in seniors, and body water content decreases. There

is also less ability to notice changes in body temperature, as well as a reduced sense of thirst. Seniors also eat less, which means they are getting fewer fluids from food. Diabetes can upset the balance even further.

**If a loved one experiences any of the signs listed below, go to the ER or contact a physician immediately:**

- Fatigue, cramping, muscle weakness, difficulty walking, dizziness, confusion, forgetfulness, headaches, difficulty breathing, dry mouth, nose, or skin, sunken eyes, inability to sweat or produce tears, a notable increase in body temperature, elevated heart rate, low blood pressure, low urine output, dark colored urine, constipation.

If you suspect dehydration in a loved one, you can check by pulling up the skin on the back of the hand for a few seconds. If it does not return to normal almost immediately, the person is dehydrated.

**Sixty-four ounces of fluids daily is recommended for good health.** First, ask a doctor for appropriate levels of fluid intake, especially for seniors affected by congestive heart failure or kidney disease.

**Here are some ways to encourage your loved one to drink enough water and healthy liquids during the day:**

- **Always have water and other healthy drinks in sight and within easy reach.** Seniors may forget without a visual reminder. Keeping a water bottle next to the bed or their favorite chair could help, especially if they have mobility issues that discourage them from getting up to get — or replenish — their fluid supply.

- **Drink sparkling water and vegetable juice.** They can reduce spikes in blood sugar and unnecessary calories throughout the day.
- **Replace caffeinated beverages with their decaffeinated versions.** Sodas, coffee drinks, and teas with caffeine all have a diuretic effect on the body.
- **Try flavored water.** Add juice, a flavored drink mix, or flavored ice cubes to a bottle of water to make it more enticing. Keep in mind that diabetics need sugar-free water.
- **Supply liquid nutritional supplements.** They provide both water and nutrients.
- **Consume foods that help with hydration.** These include broth-based soups, watermelon, apples, oranges, cucumbers, green peppers, lettuce, and tomatoes.
- **Choose healthy hydrating treats.** Popsicles, water- or juice-based smoothies, frozen juice pops, Italian ices, or sorbets are hydrating treats that can help meet water consumption goals.
- **Have seniors take extra water with medications.** Some medications can affect hydration.
- **Remind seniors not to wait until they are thirsty to drink.** Dehydration starts *before* people feel thirsty.

Article: provided by Comfort Keepers

**References include:**

- ◆ HealthAfter50.com. "Drink More Water. Here's Why." Web. 2015.
- ◆ Mayo Clinic. "Diseases and Conditions: Dehydration". Web. 2014.
- ◆ APlaceforMom.com. "Elderly Dehydration: Prevention & Treatment". Web. 2015.
- ◆ University of Nevada. "Water: Fountain of Life" – Senior Wellness Series, by Claudia C. Collins, Ph.D.



## Caregiver Bathing Techniques

Bathing is often one of the most difficult everyday care activities that care partners face. Their loved ones may feel uncomfortable and even angry about their inability to bathe themselves.



Planning can help ease bath time for both the senior and the care partner. Stick to a routine. Try to plan the bath around the same schedule they would normally take their bath/shower. i.e., morning or before going to bed.

**Here are other strategies for bathing.**

**Safety tips:**

- Never leave a confused or frail person alone in the tub or shower.
- Always check the water temperature before they get in the tub or shower.
- Use plastic containers for shampoo or soap to prevent them from breaking.
- Use a hand-held showerhead.
- Use a rubber bathmat and put safety bars in the tub.
- Use a sturdy shower chair in the tub or shower. This will support a person who is unsteady, and it could prevent falls. You can get shower chairs at drug stores and medical supply stores.

**Before a bath or shower:**

- Get the soap, washcloth, towels, and shampoo ready.
- Make sure the bathroom is warm and well lighted. Play soft music if it helps to relax the person.
- Be matter-of-fact about bathing. Say, "It's time for a bath now." Don't argue about the need for a bath or shower.
- Be gentle and respectful. Tell the person what you are going to do, step-by-step.
- Make sure the water temperature in the bath or shower is comfortable.
- Don't use bath oil. It can make the tub slippery and may cause urinary tract infections.

## During a bath or shower:

- Allow your loved one to do as much as possible. This protects his or her dignity and helps the person feel more in control. Give him or her a washcloth to assist.
- Put a towel over the person's shoulders or lap. This helps him or her feel less exposed. Then use a sponge or washcloth to clean under the towel.
- Distract the person by talking about something else if he or she becomes upset.

## After a bath or shower:

- Prevent rashes or infections by patting the person's skin with a towel. Make sure the person is completely dry. Be sure to dry between folds of skin. If the person has trouble with incontinence, use a protective ointment, such as Vaseline®, around the rectum, vagina, or penis.
- If the person has trouble getting in and out of the bathtub, do a sponge bath instead.

## Other bathing tips:

- Give the person a full bath two or three times a week. For most people, a sponge bath to clean the face, hands, feet, underarms, and genital or "private" area is all you need to do every day.
- Get professional help with bathing if it becomes too hard for you to do on your own.

## Reference:

This article was adapted from the article "Caring for a Person with Alzheimer's Disease: Your Easy-to-Use Guide from the National Institute on Aging" Retrieved from <http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/caring-person-ad/providing-everyday-care-people-ad> National Institute on Aging. (2012, July)

### Did you know there are benefits available in Ontario once you turn age 65 through OHIP?

- \* Coverage for optometrist every two years
- \* Coverage for most prescription medications  
<https://www.insurdirinary.ca/ohip-coverage-after-age-65-expanded-coverage-for-seniors/>
- \* Coverage for various assistive devices (75% coverage for most devices such as hearing devices, mobility aids, communication aids, visual aids and others)  
Visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/assistive-devices-program#section-4> for more information!

## Caring for Someone with Hearing Loss

"I can't hear you."

"For heaven's sake will you stop mumbling and speak up."

"What did you say?"

"The TV is NOT too loud!"



If you are caring for an older adult who is struggling with hearing loss, then these comments are probably all too familiar.

Statistics indicate that fully 47% of Canadians over the age of 60 have some degree of hearing loss. In the frail elderly, and for every year older than 60, the percentages just get higher.

Uncorrected hearing loss is known to be a complicating factor in conditions such as dementia and depression and can lead to physical risks of accidents and falls. Since doctors don't routinely check for hearing loss, it's often up to a care partner to ensure that hearing health matters are attended to.

It can be a challenge to convince a loved one that their hearing is impaired. Hearing loss shouldn't be embarrassing, or a topic to be avoided, but it often is both. And even after hearing aids are purchased and installed, they can be fiendishly difficult to maintain and operate, given their tiny size, delicate components, and frequent need of adjustment.

Under Ontario's Assistive Devices Program (ADP), Ontario residents who have a valid Ontario Health Card and require a hearing device for six months or longer, can apply to receive financial support. Those eligible could receive up to 75% coverage of the cost of one or two hearing aids. The maximum grant amount is \$500 per hearing aid and up to a maximum of \$1000 for two hearing aids. If there are any extra costs, the patient will be required to cover that out of pocket.

Canadian Hearing Services provides many services for deaf and hard of hearing including helpful advice about hearing loss causes and prevention, communicating more easily with someone who has uncorrected hearing loss, and guidance in the purchase and maintenance of hearing aids and other devices. <http://chs.ca/navigation> and assistance with government forms. They can be contacted at (807) 358-0190 or (807) 355-3453 or email [amolly@chs.ca](mailto:amolly@chs.ca) or [jcarrier@chs.ca](mailto:jcarrier@chs.ca).

## SCRABBLE II

Remember Scrabble? Maybe you've even been playing it with someone during your isolation, either as a board game or online. Ever wonder what all the weird, obscure words mean that are in the Official Scrabble Dictionary, but nobody ever uses? Here's a fun quiz to test your knowledge of a few of them. No cheating or googling, just take your best guess - have your loved one make guesses too, and see who comes out ahead.

Submitted by Donna Paterson

**Pick the correct definition of the word:**

### MERLIN

- A. An ancient fabric
- B. A former coin of Scotland
- C. A European falcon
- D. A cactus used as a source of liquor

### LIENAL

- A. Full of life
- B. Pertaining to the spleen
- C. Of direct descent from an ancestor
- D. In relation to a loan

### OAKUM

- A. A type of sap
- B. Twisted hemp fibre
- C. An Alabama specialty
- D. A lichen that grows in a mixed forest

### CONTRAIL

- A. Visible vapour from an aircraft
- B. An incorrect way
- C. To exercise authority
- D. A tropical parakeet

### GIGLET

- A. A unit of information
- B. A joke
- C. A playful girl
- D. A short, lively dance

### DULIA

- A. A governess
- B. A rightful heir
- C. A dull person
- D. The veneration of saints

### WAMBLE

- A. Hesitate
- B. An African dance
- C. Move unsteadily
- D. Something that is lacking

### SABOT

- A. A sob
- B. A wooden shoe
- C. A sabre
- D. A type of seed vessel

### HADE

- A. To incline
- B. A pilgrimage
- C. A poisonous snake
- D. Pertaining to a deep part of the ocean

### FERULA

- A. A female polecat
- B. Relating to iron
- C. A measurement of paper
- D. A flat piece of wood

### XERUS

- A. Requiring only a small amount of moisture
- B. A yellowish- brown mineral
- C. Able to be copied
- D. An African ground squirrel

### IXODID

- A. A flowering plant
- B. A bloodsucking insect
- C. Not allowed
- D. Pertaining to a zone

**See the correct answers on the next page!**

## SCRABBLE ANSWERS

MERLIN – ( C. ) - *n* pl. **-S** A European falcon

LIENAL – ( B. ) - *adj* Pertaining to the spleen

OAKUM – ( B. ) - *n* pl. **-S** Twisted hemp fibre

CONTRAIL – ( A. ) – *n* pl. **-S** Visible vapour from an aircraft

GIGLET – ( C. ) - *n* pl. **-S** A playful girl

DULIA – ( D. ) – *n* pl. **-S** The veneration of saints

WAMBLE – ( C. ) – *v* **-BLED, BLING, BLES** Move unsteadily

SABOT – ( B. ) – *n* pl. **-S** A wooden shoe

HADE – ( A. ) – *v* **-HADEN, HADING, HADES** To incline

FERULA – ( D. ) – *n* pl. **-LAS or LAE** A flat piece of wood

XERUS – ( D. ) – *n* pl. **-ES** An African ground squirrel

IXODID – ( B. ) – *n* pl. **-S** A bloodsucking insect

-2 – 0 correct - Oops!

1 – 2 correct – Did you not listen to anything about how to do multiple choice questions?

3 – 6 correct – Now you're talking!

7 – 11 correct – I'll take you on my team. Foot bump.

All 12 correct – Nerd City! You do, however get an elbow bump. Maybe a future hug.

**I'm guessing we all need to keep reading, playing and learning!  
Have fun today.**



This Caring Connections Newsletter is edited by:  
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