

The Fatal Five in ID/A

There are five major health issues identified in people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) that lead to serious illness, infections and sometimes death. They are called the **Fatal Five: choking/aspiration, constipation, dehydration, seizures, and infection.**



Choking



Constipation



Dehydration



Seizure



Infection

Severe dehydration may cause serious physical complications and even death. Thirst may not be a reliable sign of the need for water in this population. Watch for dry lips or mouth, irritability, dark colored urine.

Causes of Dehydration

- Diarrhea and vomiting
- Sweating excessively
- Fever
- Medication side effects
- Inability to communicate thirst
- Aging
- Medical conditions - diabetes (undiagnosed or uncontrolled), kidney disease, Crohn's disease
- Reliance on caregivers to provide fluids

Symptoms of Dehydration

- Dry mouth
- Headache
- Dizzy, lightheaded

- Sleepy, difficult to arouse
- Weak
- Thirsty
- Decrease in urination
- Dark, concentrated urine
- Tearless crying
- Confusion
- Mood changes (anxious, irritable)

Be Proactive to Prevent Dehydration

- Provide personal water bottle when in the community.
- Increase fluids when in the sun, and before, during, and after exercise.
- Offer fluids between meals.
- Follow the 8x8 rule—eight 8oz glasses per day.
- Speak to physician for suggestions for those on a fluid restriction.
- Educate people with ID/A about the importance of drinking fluids.

- Avoid caffeinated beverages—coffee, tea, and soda.
- Offer creative types of fluids - gelatin, flavored ice pops, soups.
- Encourage fruits and vegetables with high water content.
- Increase fluids for fever, diarrhea, and vomiting, when able to tolerate.
- Be a role model - drink fluids throughout your shift.