

Beat the Heat: Signs of Dehydration and When to Use Virtual Primary Care

Avoid dehydration this summer and know when to seek care

MACON, Ga., July 14, 2025 – As the temperature rises, so does the risk of dehydration. Lindsey Russell, a family nurse practitioner with Atrium Health Primary Care Family Medicine Virtual, shares tips on staying hydrated this summer, warning signs of dehydration and how virtual primary care can help you access the care you need from the comfort of your own home.

“As summer ramps up, it’s important to be prepared so you can stay hydrated,” says Russell. “And it’s super important for our vulnerable populations, such as older adults, children and those with chronic medical conditions to stay hydrated.”

Causes of dehydration

Dehydration occurs when your body loses more fluid than it takes in. The most common causes of dehydration are:

- Sweating a lot on a hot day or during intense exercise.
- Not drinking enough water.
- Taking a medication that causes frequent urination.
- Vomiting, fever or diarrhea.

How to prevent dehydration this summer

“I’m a huge proponent of staying hydrated,” says Russell. “It’s good for your heart, kidneys, skin, brain and other organs.”

She recommends:

- Aim for about 100 fluid ounces of water per day but check with your health care provider if you have a chronic condition such as kidney disease or heart failure.
- Opt for sugar-free drinks, or flavor your water with cucumber, lemon or lime.
- Before exercising in the heat, drink 16-20 ounces of water. Then, sip 6-12 ounces every 10-15 minutes, and rehydrate with 16-24 ounces afterward.
- Use a sugar-free electrolyte drink if you’re sweating heavily, vomiting or have diarrhea.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine — they can increase your risk of dehydration.
- Eat hydrating foods like fruit, vegetables and soup.

Signs of dehydration and when to seek care

Mild to moderate dehydration symptoms can include:

- Dizziness
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Confusion
- Muscle cramps
- Dry mouth
- Fatigue
- Red skin
- High heart rate with low blood pressure
- Dry cough
- Swollen feet
- Low appetite
- Constipation

- Dark-colored urine (your urine should be pale yellow or clear)

Russell also suggests gently pinching the skin on the back of your hand to determine if you're dehydrated.

"If the skin falls back down quickly, that means you're likely hydrated," she says. "If it stays in place and takes a while to return to normal, that's a clinical sign you're dehydrated."

For infants and children, dehydration symptoms can include:

- Crying without tears
- Less than six wet diapers per day (for babies)
- No urination or wet diapers for eight hours (for toddlers)
- Fussiness
- Sunken eyes
- Rapid, deep breathing
- Sunken soft spot on your baby's head
- Wrinkled, dry skin

You should call 911 if you or a loved one has signs of heatstroke or severe dehydration, including:

- A fever of 103 degrees or more
- Seizures
- Rapid pulse
- Hot, dry, red skin
- Muscle twitching
- Hallucinations
- Slurred speech
- Altered mental state
- Fainting
- Lack of sweating

Severe dehydration can be dangerous and even deadly if left untreated. Dehydration is especially risky if you have diabetes, a mental health condition, obesity or heart disease.

If you have mild to moderate symptoms and suspect dehydration, it can be helpful to contact a virtual primary care virtual provider who can meet with you through a video or phone call, review your symptoms and make recommendations for next steps.

"It helps us catch these early warning signs of dehydration before things escalate and you have to go to the emergency department for IV fluids," says Russell. "We have providers who are licensed in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia and several Midwestern states, so we can give timely advice or medication adjustments even while you're traveling. We're here and we're ready to help."

For more information about virtual visits offered by Atrium Health, visit [NavicentHealth.org/telehealth](https://www.NavicentHealth.org/telehealth).

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent is part of [Advocate Health](https://www.NavicentHealth.org), which is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is the third-largest nonprofit health system in the United States, created from the combination of Atrium Health and Advocate Aurora Health. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation's leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 130-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

About Advocate Health

[Advocate Health](https://www.AdvocateHealth.org) is the third-largest nonprofit, integrated health system in the United States, created from the combination of Advocate Aurora Health and Atrium Health. Providing care under the names [Advocate Health Care](https://www.AdvocateHealth.org) in Illinois; [Atrium Health](https://www.AtriumHealth.org) in the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama; and [Aurora Health Care](https://www.AuroraHealthCare.org) in Wisconsin, Advocate Health is a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience and value-based care. Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Advocate Health services nearly 6 million patients and is engaged in hundreds of clinical trials and research studies, with [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](https://www.WakeForestUniversitySchoolofMedicine.org) serving as the academic core of the enterprise. Advocate Health is nationally recognized for its expertise in heart and vascular, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Advocate Health employs more than 160,000 teammates across 69 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations, and offers one

of the nation's largest graduate medical education programs with over 2,000 residents and fellows across more than 200 programs. Committed to redefining care for all, Advocate Health provides more than \$6 billion in annual community benefits.

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