

- Dehydration

WAKING UP THIRSTY? HERE'S WHAT TO DO

Dehydration can manifest itself in From sweet cravings to muscle cramps, unexpected ways. Here are expert tips to deal with it

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With rising temperatures across the country and frequent heat waves, the most common problem hitting people is dehydration. Those who are often outside their homes are more prone to this health hazard than others. Dehydration refers to a condition when the body doesn't have as much water as it needs, and it can lead to several health problems. "A lack of adequate fluids in the body can affect its ability to carry out normal functions. Fluid lost through tears, vomiting, urine and diarrhoea can make one dehydrated if not replaced. Even excessive sweating can lead to dipped water content in the body," says Dr Shuchin Bajaj, consultant-internal medicine, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals.

Our body gives us signs when it gets dehydrated. Waking up thirsty or feeling thirsty all the time and excessive sweating are just a few of the symptoms. "Our body doesn't produce much saliva when dehydrated, which propagates bacterial overgrowth in the mouth, leading to bad breath. Skin gets dry and flaky due to the lack of water content in the body. Sudden muscle cramps while working out is another signal, which should not be ignored. It happens as the body is unable to cool off due to the low fluid intake. Some studies also suggest that headaches and food cravings, especially for sweets, is a symptom of dehydration in summer," says Dr Govind Sharma, Internal Medicine, Kailash Hospital, New Delhi.

Dehydration can even lead to serious health issues. "It can lead to life-threatening complications, such as heat exhaustion, heat cramps, heat stroke, seizures due to electrolyte (salt and potassium) loss, low blood volume, kidney failure, and coma. Sometimes, prolonged or repeated bouts of dehydration can cause urinary tract infections and kidney stones. So, I suggest having about half a gallon (two litres approximately) of water a day to keep dehydration at bay for most healthy adults," says Dr Sharma.

Every human body reacts differently, but there are some easy home remedies to prevent dehydration, as suggested by Dr Sushma PS, dietician, Jindal Naturecure Institute: "Taking summer coolers (like coconut water) and a change in diet is necessary. Herbs also help maintain the body's ideal temperature. Avoid or limit drinks with caffeine (like coffee, tea) as well as soft and alcoholic drinks."