

Hydration Health in Social Care

Session 2 Dementia and Hydration

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What is dementia?

- More than 55 million people worldwide are living with dementia.
- Dementia is characterised by global cognitive impairment.
- More common in those aged over 65.
- Progressive and tends to get worse with time.

- Changes to the brain secondary to damage to nerve cells.

- These changes in the brain can result in:
 - Memory impairment
 - Difficulties with language and understanding
 - Reduced ability to problem solve
 - Changes to the way we think
 - Sensory changes (vision/hearing/perception)

Examples of different types of dementia

- Alzheimer's (most common)
- Vascular (second most common)
- Dementia with Lewy body

Symptoms of dementia

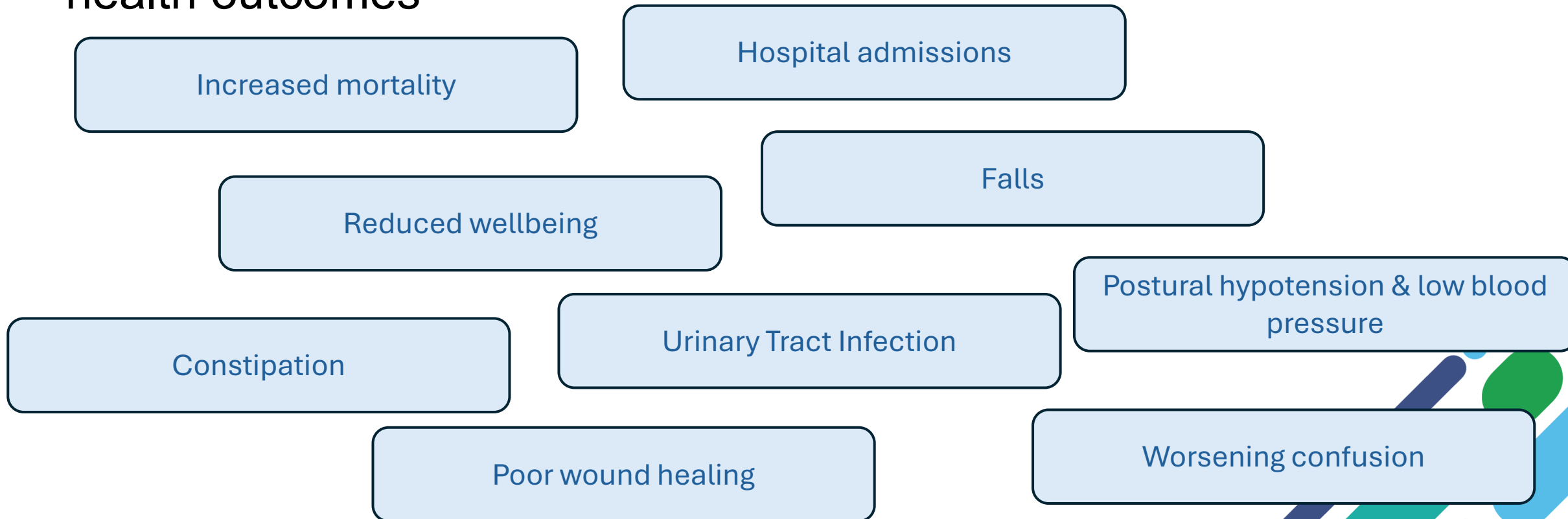
A person with dementia might:

- Forget things
- Have difficulty concentration
- Lose track of time
- Feel confused
- Have problems following conversation
- Difficulties communicating or word-finding
- Have difficulties carrying out familiar/daily tasks
- Experience low mood
- Withdraw from socialising
- In severe dementia – a person with dementia may become reliant on others for basic activities of daily living – including eating and **drinking**



Impact of dementia on hydration

- People with dementia can face difficulties with staying hydrated and hydration is more common amongst those with dementia
- Dehydration is associated with increased morbidity and poorer health outcomes



Why does dementia increase risk of dehydration?

Cognitive Impairment

- Memory – forget to drink
- Reduced ability to concentrate on drinking
- May not recognise a drink

Sensory changes: Hearing

- Reduced ability to hear
- More sensitive to sounds
- Sounds like talking through microphone

Sensory changes: Vision

- Reduced visual field
- Double vision
- Misperception
- Stationary objects look like they are moving

Sensory changes: Proprioception

- Difficulties with position of sense of self to drink

Language & Communication

- Not understand being offered a drink
- Be unable to communicate they want a drink
- Be unable to communicate their drinks preference

Sensory changes: Taste & Smell

- Reduced thirst sensation
- Change to likes/dislikes

Mood

- Low mood may result in lack of motivation to drink

Supporting residents to stay hydrated

Drinking is a basic requirement of life and promotes general wellbeing.

Adequate opportunities to drink.

Ensure offering the right level of support:

- Independent
- Verbal assistance - reminders, positive reinforcement
- Visual assistance - remind residents where their drink is
- Partial physical assistance where staff may aid residents in picking up or holding their drink
- Total physical assistance where staff guide the cup to the resident's mouth to enable drinking

Supporting residents to stay hydrated

Cognitive Impairment

- Regularly remind to drink
- Encourage them to drink providing positive reinforcement
- Let them know what and where their drink is

Sensory changes: Vision

- Ensure drink in line of vision
- Bright red container
- Clear container so can see the content
- Tidy table/environment
- Natural light

Sensory changes: Hearing

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Reduce unnecessary background noise

Language & Communication

- If not understanding, try phrasing in a different way
- Use photos or prompts to re-enforce what you are saying
- Mimic/act out taking a drink
- Give them time to respond
- Get to know their preferences

Sensory changes: Proprioception

- Right level of support to aid with act of drinking

Social interaction

- Social contact is an important trigger for drinking
- There is some evidence increased social interaction at mealtimes can increase intake
- Those with dementia sometimes imitate others and therefore seeing someone drinking may prompt them to drink
- Social interaction can stimulate the brain and improve general wellbeing – events can be enjoyable for residents and staff

Examples

1. Tea party
2. 'Mocktail' making
3. Film & Fizzy drinks party
4. Tea tasting
5. Jelly making (& with fruit rich in water content)
6. Fruit party (fruits high in water content)
7. Smoothie making
8. Encourage relatives/friends to sit and drink



General advice

- Adequate staff training
- Time to support those who need support to drink
- Monitor fluid intake
- At least seven opportunities to drink through the day



Summary

- Dementia increases the risk of dehydration and associated poor health outcomes
- Residents with dementia may need varying levels of support, which can change over time
- Changes to the brain in dementia increase their risk – forget to drink, not be able to communicate they would like a drink, not be able to identify the drink, not be able to complete the act of drinking
- It is vital residents are supported to stay hydrated



Resources

- www.dementiauk.org
- www.alzheimers.org.uk
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/
- www.southwestlondon.icb.nhs.uk/find-nhs-services/mental-health/

