Promoting Hydration in Older Adults: “Fluid for Thought”

What is dehydration?
A fluid imbalance caused by inadequate intake or excessive fluid loss.

Factors related to dehydration

- **Falling**
  - Fluid depletion may lead to:
    - low blood pressure
    - falls

- **Confusion**
  - Dehydration increases risk of delirium.
  - People with dementia may forget to drink.

- **Incontinence**
  - Older people may self-restrict fluids to minimize incontinence.

- **Iatrogenic Disorders**
  - To avoid iatrogenic disorders, minimize:
    - fasting times
    - diuretics
    - laxatives
    - physical restraints

- **Impaired Homeostasis**
  - Age-related changes that increase one’s risk of dehydration:
    - Thirst response is blunted
    - Total body water decreases
    - Decline in ability of kidneys to concentrate urine

Strategies to prevent dehydration

What can you do?

- Identify those at high risk for dehydration.
- Watch for 2 causes:
  - inadequate fluid intake
  - excessive fluid loss
- Offer fluids:
  - small amounts each time you enter the room
  - put fluids within reach
  - preferred beverages

Elder-Friendly Environments