

Focus On Fluids

Living Healthy. Living Well.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I know what can happen if I have too much fluid?
- Do I know what dry weight is?
- Do I know what counts as fluid in my diet?
- Do I know how to control my fluid intake?

If you answered no to one of the above questions,

READ ON!

One of the jobs of healthy kidneys is to remove extra fluid from the body. When the kidneys fail, dialysis can remove some of the fluid. But, you also need to drink or eat less fluid.

What happens if I have too much fluid?

If you come to dialysis with too much fluid, your treatment will make you feel bad. Your blood pressure may drop, so you feel dizzy or faint. Your muscles may cramp. You may have headaches, nausea, or pass out.

Over time, too much fluid can harm your body. Too much fluid can cause a type of heart failure. Your feet and legs may swell up with fluid. This is called edema. You may feel short of breath if extra fluid goes to your lungs. Too much fluid also makes dialysis less effective and tends to raise blood pressure.

What counts as fluid?

Anything you drink is a fluid. This includes water, coffee, tea, soda pop, milk, beer, wine, and so forth.

Some foods count as fluids, too. Any food that is liquid at room temperature, like ice cream or popsicles, is a fluid. Soups, thin stews, and watery foods like watermelon count as fluids, too. Pasta, once it is cooked, contains large amounts of fluid.

How much fluid can I have?

How much fluid you can have depends on how much urine you make. If you make a lot of urine, you can have more fluid. If you make little or no urine, you can have less fluid. Your physician will tell you what your limit for fluid intake should be.

What does salt have to do with fluid?

Salt makes you thirsty. It also makes your body keep more water. Healthy kidneys remove extra salt. When the kidneys fail, most people must limit salt and fluid. Your dietician can help you choose and prepare foods that are less salty.

What is dry weight?

Dry weight is your weight without extra fluid. One of the goals of dialysis is to remove extra water at every treatment. You are weighed on a scale before treatment. Weight gain since the last treatment is presumed to be extra fluid. When the fluids are removed to the point that your legs are skinny (no edema present), lungs are clear (no shortness of breath), and just before your blood pressure becomes too low, it is called the “dry weight”.

<u>Problem</u>	<u>How can I prevent it?</u>	<u>What should I ask?</u>
I am thirsty!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid salty or very sweet foods • Suck on hard candies (sugar-free if you are diabetic) • Use moist mouth swabs • Ask your doctor if any of your medications have thirst or dry mouth effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I drink more fluid if I sweat from exercise or hot weather? • Is thirst a side effect of my medication? If so, is there any other medication I could take that would not make me thirsty?
I have to use up too much fluid to take my pills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To take pills: Put the pill in your mouth, take a sip of fluid and look up at the ceiling. Let the pill sink to the back of your throat. Swallow the pill. • To take capsules: Put the capsule in your mouth, take a sip of fluid and look down at the floor. Let the capsule float up to the back of your throat. Swallow the pill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I group some of my pills together so I can take them with less fluid? • Is there a form of my medication that is easier to swallow?
I feel like I stand out when I'm with other people and I can't drink much fluid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save some of your fluid limit when you know there is a special event. • Carry a cup of fluid, but drink only small sips. • Use a small cup size, like 8 ounces. • Fill a cup with ice and a bit of fluid. Take sips. • Ask the waitress not to refill your cup or glass. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do other patients deal with their fluid limits?

Please take a moment to answer these True/False questions with your primary nurse.

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| 1. Dry weight is whatever weight I am after my dialysis treatment. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 2. High blood pressure may be caused from too much fluid intake. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 3. Fluid comes from only what I drink, not what I eat. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 4. If I limit my salt intake, my fluid gains between dialysis should be OK. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 5. Small cup size and small sips will help me limit my fluid intake. | TRUE | FALSE |