

Fluid facts and guidelines for the person on dialysis

For a person on dialysis, fluid is usually restricted or limited. One job of healthy kidneys is to remove excess fluid from the body. When your kidneys are not working properly, dialysis can remove some of the fluid, but you will also need to drink or eat less fluid. Having “too much” fluid can cause problems, some of which are serious. It is very important for you to follow the fluid restrictions your health care team prescribes for you.

What happens if I have too much fluid?

Some of the problems that you could experience from gaining too much fluid are:

- Swelling in your ankles and feet called edema (a-dee'-ma)
- Weakened heart muscle, and eventually heart failure caused from too much fluid stretching the heart muscle
- Shortness of breath caused from too much fluid around the lungs.
- High blood pressure
- Sudden drop in blood pressure causing you to feel faint or dizzy
- Chest pain
- Cramping during dialysis
- Headaches, nausea and overall “bad” feeling during and after your treatment
- If you have continuous high fluid gains, you may be required to stay longer or come back for an extra treatment

How do I know if I have too much fluid?

Any of the symptoms can indicate you have gained too much fluid. For a person on dialysis, fluid is measured by weight gain between dialysis treatments. The members of your health care team (your doctor, nurse, tech and dietitian) will monitor your weight gains each time you come for a treatment. They will weigh you and determine a “Dry Weight,” which is your weight without extra fluid. This is used as your target weight after fluid has been removed. In dialysis, weight is often measured in Kg, the abbreviation for kilograms. Each kg equals 2.2 pounds.

How much fluid can I have?

Limit your fluid intake to 4 cups per day.

Your daily fluid limits depend on how much urine you make. If you do not make urine then you need to strictly limit your fluid intake. Your health care team will determine your fluid allowance and will give you guidelines to follow.



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Speak with your dietitian about your individual needs

It is important not to gain more than 2 kg (4.4 pounds) between each treatment. One kg weight gain would equal about 32 ounces (the same as 4 cups or 1 quart) of fluid consumed per day. Sixteen ounces (the same as 2 cups or a pint) of retained fluid will equal one pound of weight gain. We sometimes forget what we eat or drink throughout the day, so measuring your fluid intake will make this easier to track.

What is fluid?

Fluid is anything you drink or anything that melts at room temperature. Here are some examples:

Water	Juice	Coffee	Iced Tea
Soft drinks	Jell-O	Sherbet	Lemonade
Italian ice	Beer	Alcohol	pudding/Custards
Ice	Milk	Tea	
Popsicles	Ice Cream	Kool-Aid	
Soup	Wine	Shakes	

How can I control my fluid intake?

1. Avoid salt and salty foods. Salt can make you thirsty and can cause your body to retain fluid.
2. Measure all fluid with standard measuring cups.
3. Chew sugar-free gum.
4. Take medications with applesauce instead of liquid.
5. Suck on sugar free hard candy, especially sour candy.
6. Prepare a spray bottle with water and lemon juice or cherry juice and use to lightly spray your mouth.
7. If you have diabetes, control your blood sugar.
8. Rinse your mouth with cold mouthwash (don't swallow!).
9. Stay out of the heat in the summer time.
10. Use a smaller glass with meals.
11. Brush your teeth more often.
12. A frozen lemon slice or a couple of frozen grapes (4 or less) can take the edge off your thirst.
13. Keep a daily fluid/food diary.
14. Follow the fluid allowance that has been prescribed for you and do not hesitate to ask for help.
15. Keep track of what you drink in a day. Start with an empty liter-sized bottle or a quart jar. Each time you drink, pour the same amount that you just drank into the bottle. When that bottle is full, you have used your fluid allowance for the day.

Partner with your Dietitian to create an individualized diet that works for you.

Notes
