

# Patient to Patient

Let's Talk About Fluids!



ESRD Networks 7, 13, 15, 17, 18





This booklet comes from the Patient Advisory Committee (PAC), which consists of patients just like you. They know that controlling fluids is important but challenging, and their message to you is,

***You can do this!***

## Why should you care about controlling your fluids?

As an end stage renal disease (ESRD) patient you have to be very careful about how much liquid you take in. Why? When your kidneys aren't working, you need dialysis to remove water from your body. However, dialysis cannot remove an unlimited amount of water from your body. If too much fluid builds up, you could experience serious health problems such as:

- Edema (swelling).
- Increased blood pressure.
- Abdominal discomfort.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Fatigue and/or weight gain.
- Cramps, nausea, and/or dizziness during dialysis.

You can help to reduce unwanted and unnecessary fluid buildup by taking in less water and other fluids throughout the day. Why should you care about controlling your fluids? Because your life depends on it!

—The Staff and Patient Advisors



## What is dry weight?

Dry weight is your body weight without extra fluid (water).



Dialysis removes fluid that you gain between treatments to help keep you at your dry weight.



Your dry weight is used as your target weight for each treatment.

Dry weight is not a set number.

At times it may need to be adjusted.

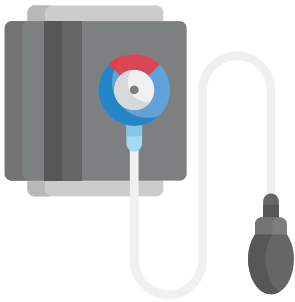
## How do you know if you are at your dry weight?



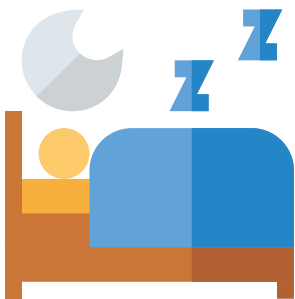
Your blood pressure may be close to what is normal for you after your dialysis treatment.



You may have little or no edema (swelling) in your eyes, hands, feet, or legs.

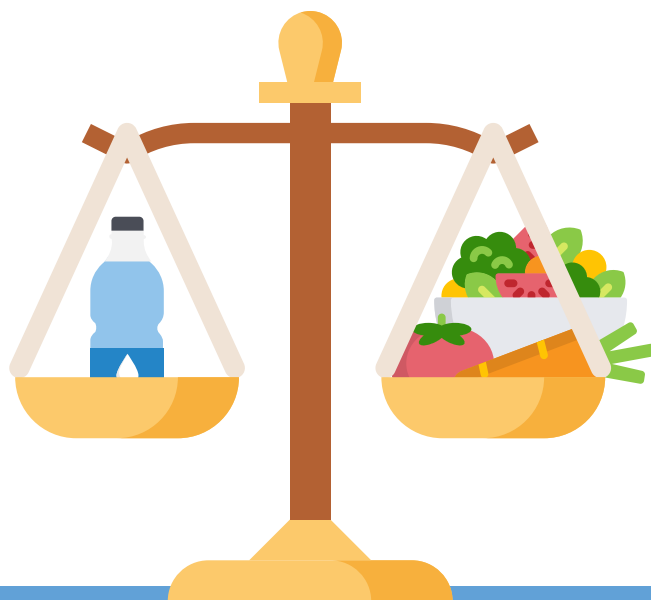


You rarely experience cramping or low blood pressure during or after dialysis.



You may not need extra pillows to help you breathe comfortably while sleeping or lying flat.

## What is fluid weight?



Fluid, or water weight, comes from the liquid found in what you eat and drink.

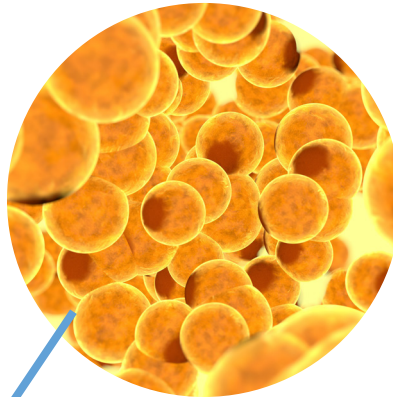


Fluid weight is measured by the amount of weight you gain between treatments.

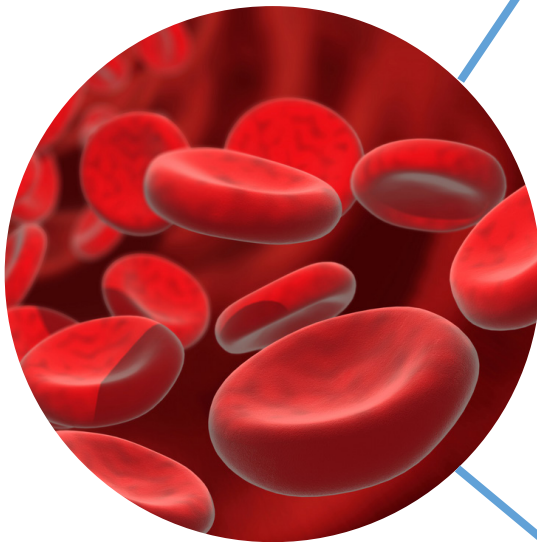
The more fluid weight you gain, the harder it is to remove during your dialysis treatment.

There is a limit to how much fluid can be removed during your dialysis treatment.

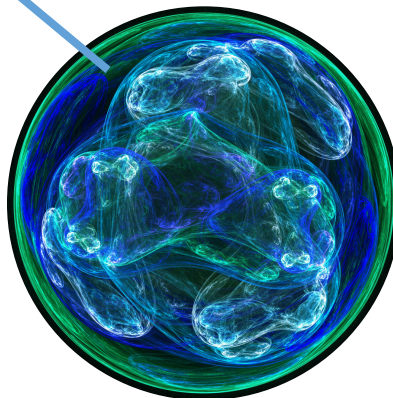
## Where is fluid located in your body?



Fluid is between your cells.



Fluid must move into your bloodstream before it can be removed during dialysis.



Fluid is inside your cells.

Dialysis only removes fluid that is located in your bloodstream.

## How can you tell if your body has too much fluid?



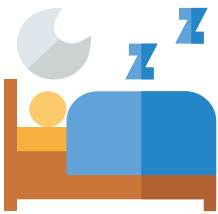
Your blood pressure may be higher than normal.



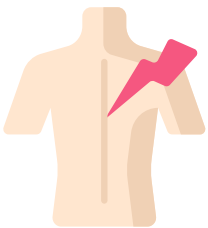
You may have swelling (edema) in your eyes, hands, legs, feet, stomach, or face.



Your abdomen may feel full and tight.



You may experience coughing or trouble breathing, especially when lying down.



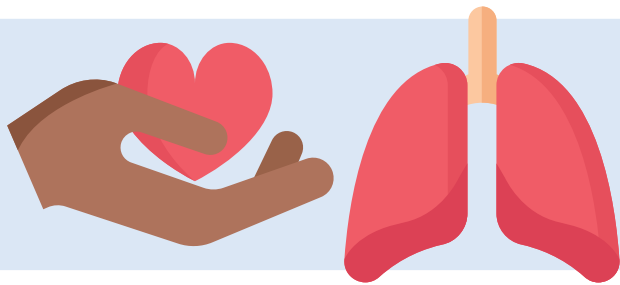
You may experience muscle cramps, nausea, dizziness during dialysis.



You may have a rapid increase in weight and may feel more tired.



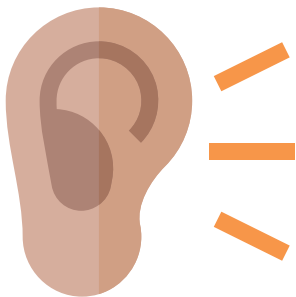
## Can too much fluid affect your heart and lungs?



**Yes!**



Your caregivers listen to your heart and lungs each dialysis treatment. They hear different sounds when you have too much fluid in your body.



Your heart can sound like it is “galloping,” and your lungs can have “crackling” sounds if you are experiencing fluid overload.

Continuously having too much fluid in your body can stretch and weaken your heart and may cause heart failure.

# What can increase the risk of fluid overload?



Having too much salt in your diet.



Drinking too much water.



Taking some medications.



Having a hormonal imbalance.



Having low protein in the blood and/or liver disease.



Experiencing too much stress.



Having heart disease or heart failure.

Talk with your healthcare team about working together to decrease these risks.

## Can fluid hide in food?

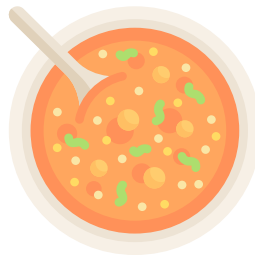


**Yes!**

Here are some foods that have “hidden” fluids.



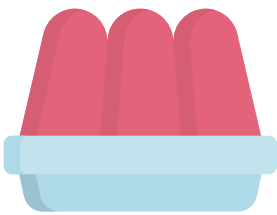
Popsicles



Soup



Pudding



Jello



Gravy



Ice Cream

Take time to drain fruits and vegetables after cooking or removing from a can. Remember to rinse canned vegetables before cooking.

# What does sodium have to do with fluid control?

Foods high in sodium (salt) will make you thirsty and likely to drink more fluids. Sodium is found in table salt and processed/convenience foods.

High-sodium foods include:

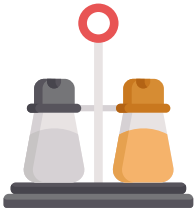
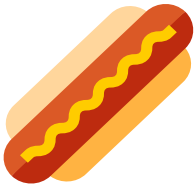


Table salt.



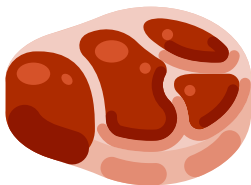
Foods with visible salt on them like chips, pretzels, and crackers.



Cured and canned meats like hot dogs, lunch meat, sausages, bacon, and Spam©.



Prepared foods like canned soup, chili, hash, frozen dinners, and pot pies.



Seasoning kits like Hamburger Helper© and fresh meats that are seasoned at the grocery store.

## Is there a way to avoid extra salt in your food?



The easiest way to avoid extra salt is to prepare your own meals from fresh meats, vegetables, fruits, and grains



Season without adding salt by using herbs and spices for flavor or a low-sodium seasoning blend.



Ask your dietitian for seasoning suggestions and recipes.

Salt loves water and makes your body want more water.

## What do patients say about controlling fluids?



*What works for me may not work for you. You have to find your own motivation to do well on dialysis to avoid cramps, feeling bad on the machine, and staying out of the hospital. A lot of wanting to do well comes from the support of family and friends.*

—Nancy, NM



*I've found that a squeeze of lemon juice in warm or room temp water is more refreshing than cold drinks which make one want to guzzle.*

—Billy, CO



*What I do is eat my protein first, then the rest of my meal, then I allow myself to drink. This way I'm full of food, and drink less at meals.*

—Phyllis, AZ



*Drinking baby sodas or box juices allows you the satisfaction of being able to finish them and they are measured so you can keep better track.*

—Maile, NV



*Be proactive. By the time you weigh in at dialysis (and you're fluid overloaded), it's too late.*

—Matt, UT



*If you're diabetic, you should maintain good glucose levels as higher levels will increase thirst.*

—Betty, WY



*I love water so controlling my fluid intake was a struggle. I had to be intubated for a week due to fluid overload before realizing I could die if I didn't manage my fluid intake.*

—Nancy, NM



*I didn't realize the impact that fluid has on your heart—we've already lost kidney function, we need to protect our other organs!*

—Maile, NV



*Controlling fluids when you're out is a challenge and you have to be more careful. I use a coffee cup for water when I eat out and keep it away from the server so it isn't automatically refilled!*

—Billy, CO

# How much fluid should you have each day?

Generally, 24-32 ounces is recommended. Every patient is different. Talk with your dietitian about how much fluid you can have each day.

I can have  ounces of fluid each day.

I can have \_\_\_\_\_ ounces with breakfast.

I can have \_\_\_\_\_ ounces in the morning.

I can have \_\_\_\_\_ ounces with lunch.

I can have \_\_\_\_\_ ounces in the afternoon.

I can have \_\_\_\_\_ ounces with supper.

I can have \_\_\_\_\_ ounces in the evening.

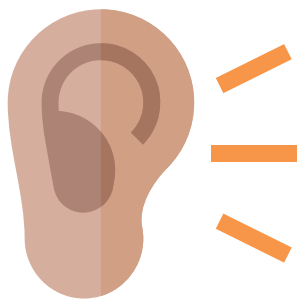
I can have \_\_\_\_\_ ounces with medicine.

TOTAL  ounces

*Should equal the amount  
written in the box above.*



## What should you remember about fluid control?



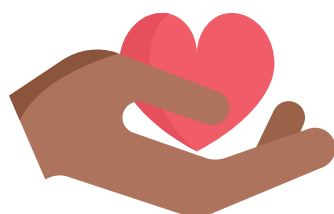
Too much fluid can make your heart sound like it's galloping.



Controlling sodium and blood sugar can reduce thirst.



Your dry weight is used as your target weight for each treatment.



High fluid weight gains can stretch and weaken your heart.

There is a limit to how much fluid can be removed during your dialysis treatment.





*Many thanks to the 2019 Network 15 PAC for their assistance in updating this booklet, originally created by the following PAC and Medical Review Board members:*

**Phyllis**—Arizona  
**Cathrine**—Arizona  
**Billy**—Colorado  
**Maile**—Nevada  
**Nancy**—New Mexico  
**Matt**—Utah  
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# *Thank You!*

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