



Department of Renal Medicine

Patient Dietary Advice – Limiting Your Intake of Fluids

What is fluid and why do I need to control it?

Our bodies contain a large amount of water which is essential for life. It helps to maintain our blood pressure, and the functions of the body.

Your body is 60-70% fluid. There is a difference between your fluid weight and body weight. Weight changes due to fluid often occur quickly over a period of days. Changes in body weight (muscle, bone, fat) occur more slowly, over weeks or months.

If you have too much fluid in your body, you may experience the following symptoms:

- Breathlessness - this is due to fluid on your lungs (pulmonary oedema)
- Swelling of your feet, ankles and sometimes legs (oedema)
- High blood pressure
- Puffy eyes
- Headaches

Your doctor may recommend limiting your intake of fluid to help control these symptoms.

How much fluid can I drink?

The amount of fluid you can drink each day will depend upon your health condition and treatment. You will be advised by your doctor or dietitian how much fluid you should have each day. Your fluid allowance may change over time.

If you have kidney disease and require dialysis, your fluid allowance will depend upon three things:

- The type of dialysis you have
- The frequency of dialysis
- Your daily urine output

If you are on **haemodialysis**, your fluid gains between sessions should be minimal. Typically, your fluid allowance will be 500ml plus your daily urine volume.

If you are on **peritoneal dialysis**, your fluid allowance is typically 800ml plus your daily urine volume.

Your doctor or dietitian will inform you of how much fluid you can drink per day.

My fluid allowance is _____ ml each day.

What can I do if I need to limit my fluid intake?

Measure the amount of liquid from drinks

Measure the amount of fluid you drink each day until you feel confident that you can manage your daily fluid allowance. Tips to help monitor fluid intake include:

- Use jugs and measuring cups to accurately measure your fluid intake
- Measure the size of your cup and glass and use the same one across the day
- Count tea, coffee, herbal teas, squash/cordial, fizzy drinks and mixers, alcohol, smoothies and milkshakes in your fluid restriction

Count the fluid from soft and runny foods

Some foods contain high amounts of fluid and should be included as part of your daily fluid allowance. Some examples include:

- Milk on cereals
- Sauces, soups, stews and gravies
- Jelly, instant/milky puddings and instant whips
- Nutritional supplement drinks
- Soft foods like porridge, crème brûlée
- Yogurt, ice cream, custard

Reduce the amount of salt in your diet

- Where possible, choose and cook freshly prepared food with no salt added
- Do not add salt during cooking or at the table
- Read the food labels and choose foods with a lower salt content
- Choose unsalted snacks
- Choose wisely when you go to a restaurant or takeaway. Some menu options are much higher in salt. You can ask the chef not to add any salt to your meal.

Use these additional tips to make limiting your fluid easier

- Spread your fluid allowance evenly across the day
- Use a smaller size cup or glass and only fill it half way
- If you feel thirsty, try sugar free sweets, mints, slice of lemon or chewing gum, ice cubes or frozen, low potassium fruit
- Rinse your mouth with mouthwash or iced water. Clean your teeth to moisten and freshen your mouth
- Keep lips moist by using lip balm
- Take your medicines with meals, where possible (unless the label instructs you otherwise)
- If you have diabetes, maintain good blood glucose levels. High blood glucose levels will make you thirsty

