

# Why Does Fluid Matter?

## How Does Dialysis Remove Fluid?

When your kidneys fail, you make less urine. This means fluids can only be removed from the blood during dialysis.

Most of the body's fluid is inside the cells. During dialysis, fluid is pulled from the bloodstream. To keep a balance, fluid moves between the spaces slowly over time, moving from the cells to the space between the cells then into the blood.

A dialysis treatment that removes too much fluid, or removes it too quickly, is harmful. It can cause you to not feel well during treatment and cause damage to your organs.

### The Body Holds Fluid in Three Spaces



Inside the  
Cells



Between  
the Cells



In the  
Blood

## What Are Fluid Weight and Dry Weight

**Fluid weight (weight you gain)** is the weight you gain between treatments from liquids found in what you eat and drink.

**Dry weight or target weight** is your weight without extra fluid. Your doctor determines your dry weight by looking at your previous weight, your breathing, any swelling you have, and your blood pressure. Over time you may gain body weight and this may call for a change to your dry weight. Some reasons why your body weight may change:

- You may gain weight because your appetite gets better with enough dialysis.
- You may lose weight during an illness or hospitalization.



## How Much Fluid Will Be Removed During Dialysis?

Each time before your treatment, you are weighed and it is recorded in kilograms. This number is compared to your “dry weight” and your weight from your last treatment. Your care team will use these weights to determine how much fluid is safe to remove during dialysis.

## What Can Happen If You Remove Too Much Fluid Or Remove It Too Quickly During Dialysis?



Low blood pressure



Headache



Cramping



Dizziness



Nausea/vomiting



Feeling washed out for hours

When too much fluid is removed too quickly it can damage your organs by starving them of oxygen.

## What Can I Do?

- Make a fluid control plan with your dietitian.
  - Watch how much you drink and eat. Fluid is in many things that you eat, like yogurt, soups and lettuce.
  - Limit how much salt you use. Salt is also in many foods and drinks and causes water to remain in the body.
- Go to all your treatments and stay for the entire time.
- Consider your treatment options. Home dialysis, daily dialysis or nocturnal dialysis can help you to remove more fluid slowly and minimize the symptoms you may be having.
- Take your medications, like diuretics or water pills, if ordered by your doctor.
- Make sure your weight is correct each treatment:
  - Wear the same type of clothing when weighing at dialysis
  - Empty your bladder and bowel before weighing
  - Repeat your weight if you do not agree with it.

## Ask Your Care Team

- What can I do to keep my correct weight?
- I have trouble with my weight, what can I do?
- I have swelling and sometimes get short of breath, what could be the problem?
- Does dialysis help me lose body weight?