

My Treatment: Why Does Fluid Matter?

When your kidneys no longer work well, they stop removing waste and fluid from your body through urine. This can cause you to have health problems like shortness of breath, swelling, and weight gain. During dialysis the machine helps to remove some of the waste and fluid. Limiting how much fluids you have between treatments can help you feel better before, during and after dialysis. Read more to learn why fluid matters to your dialysis treatment and some tips for staying on track.



How Does Dialysis Remove Fluid?

The Body Holds Fluid in Three Spaces



Inside the Cells



Between the Cells



In the Blood

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.

What Are Fluid Weight and Dry Weight



Fluid weight is the weight you gain between treatments from liquids found in what you eat and drink. The amount of fluid you gain is different depending on whether you urinate or not. If you gain a lot between treatments it will be harder to remove all of it during your treatment.



Dry weight is your body mass (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. These weights may be the same or they may be a little different. They are then used to determine how much fluid to be removed 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. For ideas check out the [“My Plan: How Do I Control My Fluid Gains?”](#) page.

- 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 by:

- Wearing the same type of clothing when weighing at dialysis;
- Empty your bladder and bowel before weighing; and
- Repeat your weight if you do not agree with it.

My Questions: 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?

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