

Renal (Haemodialysis) Unit Patient Information



The Information Standard Certified Member

Information

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Publication Date: 12/15
Review Date: 12/18

What is Dry Weight

Dry weight is your weight without the excess fluid that builds up between dialysis treatments. It is the lowest weight you can safely reach after dialysis without developing symptoms of low blood pressure such as cramping, which can occur when too much fluid is removed during haemodialysis.

Not removing enough fluid however, may leave you overloaded, put added strain on your heart, keep the blood pressure high and cause difficulty for the next treatment.

Dry weight should be assessed every three to six weeks and adjusted when a patient gains or loses actual weight. Urine output often stops completely after six months of being on haemodialysis.

What happens if you go below dry weight

If too much fluid is removed and goes below the dry weight, you may experience dehydration causing:

- thirst
- dry mouth
- light headedness
- cramping
- nausea
- restlessness
- cold extremities
- rapid heartbeat
- low blood pressure

How fluid gain affects dialysis

Excess fluid affects the body in harmful ways. It can cause:

- weight gain
- increase in blood pressure due to extra fluid in the blood stream
- swelling or oedema in the feet, ankles, wrists, face and around the eyes
- shortness of breath due to fluid in the lungs
- heart problems, which can include a fast pulse, weakened heart muscles and an enlarged heart

Why do I need to control the amount I drink

Kidneys control the amount of fluid in the body. As kidneys fail, they become unable to do this. Once you start haemodialysis, it is likely that you will need to reduce the amount you drink each day to prevent fluid from building up in the body. You will need to limit the amount that you drink as well as the amount of 'wet' foods that you eat.

If you take in more water than you get rid of, the extra fluid stays in your body. This is known as **fluid overload**. Fluid overload can strain your heart and lungs and can be dangerous. If you take in too little fluid (or lose a lot, for example through sickness or diarrhoea) you may become **dehydrated and it will affect your access (fistula/graft/central venous catheter)**. Finding the right balance is not always easy.

Your fluid allowance (the volume of daily fluid that is healthy for you) will depend on the dialysis you are having, your blood pressure and the amount of urine passed. You may be asked to measure the urine you pass in 24 hours to help calculate your fluid allowance.

How much fluid can I have each day?1000 - 1500..... ml (millilitres)

How to keep to a fluid allowance

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a smaller cup and spread your drinks throughout the day.• Sip drinks slowly – try freezing a drink in a 200ml plastic bottle and sip it throughout the day as it defrosts.• Use an ice cube in place of a drink to refresh your mouth – try making them with fruit squash. Count them in your fluid allowance.• Suck on a slice of lemon or lime.• Chew sugar-free gum.• Rinse your mouth with mouthwash or some iced water.• Unless otherwise advised, take tablets with food instead of water. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drain vegetables and tinned fruits and make sure washed salad is dried.• Limit fluid from foods, for example sauces, soup, gravy, custard, jelly, porridge.• Remember, cold drinks quench your thirst more than hot drinks.• If you have a dry mouth, ask your GP for artificial saliva or gel to ease this.• Limit the amount of spicy and salty foods you eat.• Do not add salt to meals and reduce stock cubes, Maggie cubes and salted seasonings in cooking, as they increase thirst. Try using fresh or dried herbs instead. |
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