Fluids and Your Kidney Diet

Your kidneys remove extra fluid from your body. If your kidneys are not working properly, extra fluid can build up around your ankles, eyes, hands, or in your lungs. Your heart will have to work much harder to push all the extra fluid through your body. This will increase your blood pressure and can cause heart failure.

You may need to limit fluids to help keep your fluids in balance. Cutting back on salt and dialyzing regularly can also help keep your fluids in balance. Your doctor, nurse, or dietitian will help you decide how much fluid is safe for you.

What are fluids?

Anything that is liquid at room temperature counts as a fluid. Examples of fluids include:

- all drinks
- juice from canned fruit
- Jell-O®
- ice cream
- sherbet
- popsicles
- crushed ice and ice cubes
- soup
- sauces and gravies
- coffee and tea

Tips to keep your fluids in balance

- Carefully follow your fluid and diet restrictions (especially sodium) set by your doctor or dietitian.
- Monitor your weight if you are on hemodialysis. Weight gain of 2 to 3 kg (4.5 to 6.5 lbs) between treatments is all right for most people.
- Monitor your blood pressure and be aware of changes from your normal level.
- You should drink only 2 to 4 cups (500 to 1000 mL) of fluid plus the amount of urine your kidneys make each day.
- Do not cut back on the amount of fluid you drink unless your doctor or dietitian suggests it. It is just as important to have enough fluid as it is to reduce fluid when you need to.

Have no more than _________ mL or _________ cups in 24 hours.

How do I know if I am drinking a safe amount of fluid each day?

The amount of fluid allowed in the diet is different for everyone. It will depend on your weight gains, blood pressure, and how much urine you make. Your doctor, nurse, or dietitian will help you decide how much fluid is safe for you.

It is just as important to take in enough fluid as it is to reduce your intake as needed. Tell your doctor, nurse, or dietitian if you have one or more of the following symptoms:

Over hydration:

- swelling in your arms, legs, or ankles
- sudden increase in weight
- high blood pressure (hypertension)
- shortness of breath
- trouble breathing
- muscle cramping (for people on dialysis)

Dehydration:

- low blood pressure (hypotension)
- muscle cramping
- weight loss
- dizziness, headaches
**Tips to control your fluid intake**

- Spread your fluids throughout the day, over your meals and snacks.
- Drink only when you are thirsty.
- If possible, take your pills with meal time liquids or take them with soft foods such as applesauce.
- Drink from a small glass or cup.
- Drain liquid from canned fruit.
- Freeze some of your fluids into ice cubes. Frozen fluids last longer but still count towards your fluid intake.
- When you rinse your mouth with water, spit it out before swallowing.
- Don’t add salt to foods when cooking and at the table. Cut back on eating packaged or processed foods that are high in salt. Salt will make you thirsty. Ask your dietitian for more tips on cutting back on salt.

**If you have a dry mouth**

- Brush and floss your teeth more often. Rinse your mouth with chilled mouthwash that is not alcohol-based.
- Use a cold air humidifier, especially at night.
- Breathe through your nose, not your mouth.
- Suck on sugar-free hard sour candies, strong breath mints, lemon wedges, or chew sugar-free gum.
- Suck on frozen fruits such as cherries, grapes, strawberries, peaches, and pineapple.
- Spray your mouth with one of the mixtures listed below using a small spray bottle.

**Lemon spray:**

½ cup (125 mL) lemon juice
½ cup (125 mL) water

Mix the ingredients in a spray bottle and use as needed.

**Mint spray:**

1 tsp (5 mL) peppermint extract
1 cup (250 mL) water

Mix ingredients in a spray bottle and use as needed.

**Keeping track of your fluid intake**

Use the steps below to help you track how much fluid you drink each day:

1. Using water, measure the total amount of fluid you are allowed for the day. Pour this amount into an empty 2 litre pop bottle.
2. Mark a line on the bottle to show the water level. **This is how much fluid you can have each day.**
3. Pour the measured water out, and start with an empty container. Each time you have something that counts as a fluid pour an equal amount of water into the bottle.
4. **Stop drinking when the water gets to the marked line!**
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 every day.

You can also measure all the fluid you take in and keep track on your recording sheet. Talk to your dietitian about how you can watch your fluids.

**Measuring fluids**

1 ounce (oz) = 30 mL
½ cup = 4 oz = 125 mL
1 cup = 8 oz = 250 mL
1 liter = 4 cups = 32 oz = 1000 mL

**Some examples:**

½ cup Jell-O® = ½ cup fluid
1 cup ice = ½ cup fluid