



Why are my fluids limited?

One of the jobs of healthy kidneys is to remove extra fluid from the body. When the kidneys fail, dialysis can remove some of the fluid. But you also need to drink or eat less fluid.

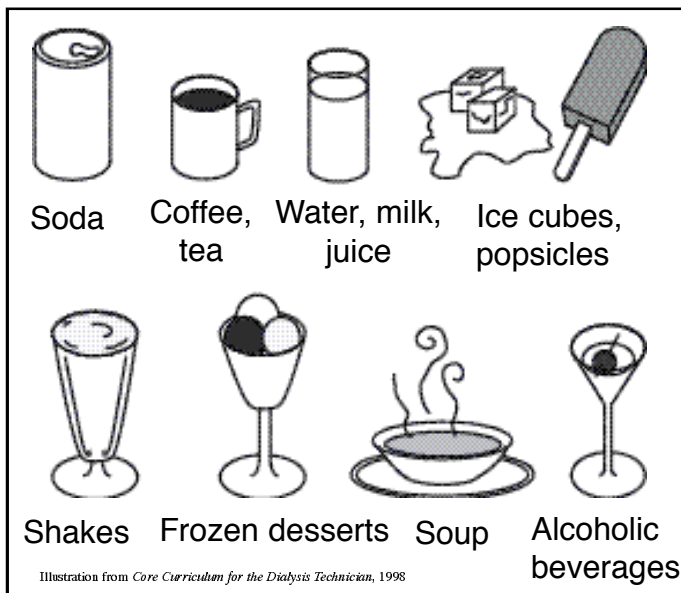


Illustration from Core Curriculum for the Dialysis Technician, 1998

What happens if I have too much fluid?

If you come to dialysis with too much fluid, your treatment will make you feel bad. Your blood pressure may drop, so you feel dizzy or faint. Your muscles may cramp. You may have headaches, nausea, or pass out.

Over time, too much fluid can harm your body. Too much fluid can cause a type of heart failure. Your feet or legs may swell up with fluid. This is called *edema* (a-dee'-ma). You may feel short of breath if extra fluid goes to your lungs.

What counts as a fluid?

Anything you drink is a fluid. This includes water, coffee, tea, soda pop, milk, beer, wine, and so forth.

Some foods count as fluids, too. Any food that is liquid at room temperature, like ice cream or popsicles, is a fluid. Soups, thin stews, and watery foods like watermelon count as fluids, too.

How much fluid can I have?

How much fluid you can have depends on how much urine you make. If you make a lot of urine, you can have more fluid. If you make no urine, you can have less fluid. Your urine will be measured to see how much fluid you should have. Measuring your fluids for a while will help you get used to your limit.

What does salt have to do with fluid?

Salt makes you thirsty. It also makes your body keep more water. Healthy kidneys remove extra salt. When the kidneys fail, most people must limit salt and fluid. Ask your dietitian how to make foods taste good without adding salt.

What is dry weight?

Dry weight is your weight without extra fluid. It is used as a target for each treatment. At your dry weight, you should feel good after dialysis. This is often measured in Kg (kilograms). Each Kg equals 2.2 pounds.

Problem	How can I prevent it?	What should I ask?
I am thirsty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid salty or very sweet foods. • Suck on hard candies (sugar-free if you are diabetic). • Use moist mouth swabs. • Ask your doctor if any of your medications have thirst or dry mouth as a side effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I drink more fluid if I sweat from exercise or hot weather? • Is thirst a side effect of my medication? If so, is there any other medication I could take that would not make me thirsty?
I have to use up too much fluid to take my pills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To take pills: Put the pill in your mouth. Take a sip of fluid and look up at the ceiling. Let the pill sink to the back of your throat. Swallow the pill. • To take capsules: Put the capsule in your mouth. Take a sip of fluid and look down at the floor. Let the capsule float up to the back of your throat. Swallow the capsule. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I group some of my pills together so I can take them with less fluid? • Is there a form of my medication that is easier to swallow?
I feel like I stand out when I'm with other people and I can't drink much fluid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save some of your fluid limit when you know there is a special event. • Carry a cup of fluid, but drink only tiny sips. • Use a small cup size, like eight ounces. • Fill a cup with ice and a bit of fluid. Take sips. • Ask the waitress not to refill your cup or glass. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do other patients deal with their fluid limits?

Where can I get more information about fluid and dialysis?

- Visit Kidney School™ Module 9: *Nutrition and Fluids for People on Dialysis* at www.kidneyschool.org.



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