Oxford Kidney Unit

Your fluid balance – for people with kidney disease, not on dialysis

Information for patients
This leaflet has been written to give you advice if you have kidney disease and have been told by your kidney doctor or nurse that you should limit the amount of fluid you drink.

This leaflet is for people who are not on dialysis. If you are on haemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis, please ask your nurse for the leaflets on fluid balance when on dialysis.

**Why do I need to limit how much I drink?**

One of the functions of your kidneys is to control the amount of water in your body. This is known as ‘fluid balance’. In some kidney diseases, getting rid of excess fluid can become a problem. If you have too much fluid in your body you may experience the following symptoms:

- breathlessness due to fluid on your lungs (pulmonary oedema)
- swelling of your ankles and sometimes legs (oedema)
- high blood pressure
- puffy eyes
- headaches.

**Your daily fluid intake (allowance)**

If you are an inpatient on the Renal Ward, your named nurse or kidney doctor will let you know how much fluid you should have every day. Everyone’s allowance is different.
How is my fluid intake monitored?

Your named nurse will monitor the amount of fluid you have each day and record it on your fluid balance chart. We encourage you to record how much fluid you have through the day on your own fluid balance chart. This will help you to keep track on how much you are drinking.

When monitoring your fluid intake, your allowance will include tea, coffee, cold drinks and fluid rich food, such as gravy, soup and ice-cream. As a guide:

- 1 average cup/mug = 150mls/200mls
- 1 average glass = 200mls
- 1 scoop ice-cream = 30mls
- 1 carton yoghurt = 100mls
- 1 bowl of cereal with milk (or pudding with sauce, such as custard) = 100mls
- 1 ladle of soup = 100mls
- 1 ice cube = 10mls

Your nurse will weigh you each day and will record your weight in your charts. Your kidney doctor can use the measurements of your weight to assess how much fluid you are losing.

One litre of fluid weighs 1kg, so your weight will go down by 1kg for every litre of excess fluid your body gets rid of.
Tips on managing your fluid allowance

Taking a lot of salt in your food will make you thirsty and make it difficult for you to stick to your fluid allowance. You can cut your salt intake by:

• avoiding adding salt to food
• eating less salty foods
• avoiding processed food (for example, most sliced bread and ready meals have a lot of added salt – for further information about this please speak to an Oxford Kidney Unit dietitian)
• using chilli or pepper to add flavour, instead of salt.

You should avoid salt replacement products such as ‘LoSalt’ because they contain a high amount of potassium. This causes problems in people with kidney disease.

You can reduce the amount of fluid you drink by:

• using small cups or filling cups only half-full
• taking small sips rather than big gulps
• measuring your total fluid allowance into a jug at the start of each day. Every time you have a drink, take that amount of volume away from the jug, so that you know what you have left to drink.
• letting family and friends know that you can only drink a certain amount each day, so that they are not tempted to give you extra fluids
• spreading your allowance evenly throughout the day
• sucking small ice cubes (an average ice cube is 10-20mls, so 10 ice cubes = a small cup)
• having sweets such as mints, boiled sweets or chewing gum instead of a drink, or if your mouth feels dry.
Where can I get further information?

If you have any questions about anything in this leaflet, please speak to your kidney doctor or your named nurse.

The website of the Oxford Kidney Unit has information about the Oxford Kidney Unit for patients and their relatives.
Website: www.ouh.nhs.uk/OKU

Davita website – this has information about fluid balance and tips for managing this.
Website: www.davita.com/kidney-disease/diet-and-nutrition/diet-basics/fluid-control-for-kidney-disease-patients-on-dialysis/e/5321

Kidney patient website – this has more information on managing your fluid balance.
Website: www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk/fluid.php
If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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