

# Balance your fluids for a healthier you

Amy Braglia-Tarpey, MD, RD, CNSC | Last reviewed August 2021

**S**taying on top of your fluid intake with kidney disease may help keep you healthier and out of the hospital. We'll share some simple ways to keep track of what you drink and eat so you don't put yourself into fluid overload.

## **When your kidneys can't get rid of extra fluid**

When you have kidney disease, your kidneys can't remove all the extra fluid from your blood and body. This can make you feel sick, have shortness of breath, see swelling in your feet and legs, raise your blood pressure, and it can also cause your heart to work harder. Your doctor or dietitian will let you know how much fluid you should get each day from your beverages and food. It will depend on your stage of kidney disease, your medications and your type of dialysis, if you are on it.

---

## **With home dialysis you may be able to drink and eat more.**

---

### **Your care, your way, at home**

With home dialysis you may be able to drink more and eat a greater variety of food. Talk to your doctor or care team today to learn more about this option.<sup>1,2</sup>



## Here are three ways you can manage your thirst.

### 1. Say no to salty foods

Salt makes you thirsty, so limiting the amount of salty foods you eat can help. The next time you're shopping, making a meal or eating out, try to:

- Avoid prepackaged or frozen meals (they are usually loaded with salt)
- Read food labels and look for foods with less than a 10% daily value (DV) of sodium
- Limit or avoid all processed meats, which pack a salty punch (processed meats include cold cuts, bacon, sausage, and other canned and cured meats)
- Cook with spices and herbs instead of salt (but avoid very spicy food)
- Avoid fast food or don't eat it often

### 2. Try techniques to quench your thirst

Limiting how much you drink each day can feel hard sometimes. To make it easier, you can:

- Sip your drinks from a small cup or glass (using a smaller container tricks your brain into thinking you drank more, so you feel more satisfied)
- Freeze your favorite drink into ice cubes and suck on them (but remember to count the ice cubes as part of the day's liquid)
- Freeze and suck on low-potassium fruits such as strawberries, blueberries or grapes (if you also have diabetes, remember to count the carbohydrates from these foods as part of your meal plan)
- Drink cold beverages, not hot ones
- Chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free hard candy
- Suck on lemon or lime wedges
- Maintain normal blood sugar levels, if you have diabetes, because high levels will make you thirsty

### 3. Pay attention to what's around you

Your environment plays a part in how much you want to drink. Try to:

- Stop before you drink and decide if you're just bored or drinking out of habit
- Sip your beverages, so you can savor the liquid longer
- Stay cool and avoid getting overheated — wear loose-fitting clothes and use a fan or air conditioner
- Always have breath spray and lip balm handy to keep your mouth and lips moist
- Battle dry mouth by brushing your teeth or using mouthwash

**These are just a few ways to keep your thirst at bay. There are many more — be creative and see what works for you. Your doctor or dietitian can tell you how much fluid you can have. Remember you should always consult with your health care team if you have any concerns.**

<sup>1</sup> [Kidney.org/sites/default/files/11-50-0214\\_hemodialysis.pdf](https://www.kidney.org/sites/default/files/11-50-0214_hemodialysis.pdf). Accessed August 30, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> The National Kidney Foundation. Choosing a Treatment for Kidney Failure. 2013. Available at: [Kidney.org/sites/default/files/11-10-0352\\_choosing\\_treat.pdf](https://www.kidney.org/sites/default/files/11-10-0352_choosing_treat.pdf). Accessed August 30, 2021.

All content is the property of CVS Health®. The information provided is not a substitute for the medical diagnosis, treatment and/or instructions provided by health care providers.