

Patient information

A guide to fluid restriction

Fluid restriction is needed if your body is holding water. This is called fluid retention (oedema or if localised to abdomen = ascites). A fluid restriction limits the amount of fluids you are allowed to consume from food and beverages. You may have been put onto fluid restriction due to having a certain condition, for example:

- Heart failure
- Kidney disease
- Liver disease
- Endocrine and adrenal gland disorders
- Conditions that cause the release of stress hormones
- Treatment with medications called corticosteroids
- Low levels of sodium in the blood (hyponatraemia)

If you go over your fluid allowance and / or your body retains fluid you may experience:

- Swelling of hands, ankles, and / or feet
- Increased size of the veins in your neck
- Weight gain
- Increased urination
- Limited activity tolerance / shortness of breath
- Decreased appetite / feeling full earlier than usual
- Increased blood pressure
- Rapid heartbeat
- Dizziness, weakness, fatigue, and / or confusion

These symptoms may be uncomfortable, but they can also be dangerous. Please contact your doctor if you notice any sudden change or progressive worsening of these symptoms.

How much fluid should I have?

Fluid intake is individual so do not be guided by other patients. Your doctor should guide you with the amount of fluid that you are allowed per day.

You should restrict your fluid intake to mls per day.

What counts?

It is important for you to count all drinks that you consume throughout a day and any food that is liquid or which melts. For example:

All drinks including:

- Tea, coffee, juice, squash, milk and supplement drinks
- Milk on cereal
- Ice cubes
- Drinks consumed when taking medications.

Foods which are liquid or melt including:

- Savoury: soup, gravy, sauces e.g. white sauce, cheese sauce or pepper sauce
- Sweet: custard, ice-cream, sorbet, yoghurt, milk puddings or jelly.

You should count foods with high fluid content as half (1/2) fluid. You do not need to count solid foods.

The following measures can help you to add up your daily fluid intake:

One average teacup	150-200ml
One average mug	300ml
One average glass tumbler	200ml
One average tall glass	300ml
One average plastic cup	150ml
One average can of drink	330ml
One average bottle of water	500ml
One tablespoon of sauce or one ice cube	15–30ml
Milk on cereal	150ml
Milk on porridge	250ml
Portion of soup	200ml
100g jelly (small carton)	85ml

Useful conversions:

- 1 teaspoon – 5ml
- 1 tablespoon – 15ml
- 1 pint – approx. 570ml
- 1 litre – 1000ml / approx. 1¾ pints

Scoop of ice cream	30ml
125g custard / rice pudding (small pot)	100ml
125g yoghurt (small pot)	100ml

Hints to help you drink less:

- Know your fluid allowance. Measure the amount of fluid that your favourite cup, mug or glass holds to calculate how many drinks you can have throughout a day
- Measure out the volume of liquid you are allowed using a marked jug. Every time you drink, take that amount away from the jug, so you know how much you have left
- Use small cups or glasses for drinks that hold no more than 150ml
- Drink when you are feeling thirsty, not out of habit
- Avoid 'topping up' your drink as this will make it harder to keep track
- Spread your fluid allowance throughout the day
- Take drinks between meals and not with meals
- Take drinks that quench your thirst. Very sweet or salty drinks will not help your thirst
- Sip your drinks, do not gulp them! Try a straw with cold drinks to slow you down
- Take medications with very small sips of water, or try apple sauce or other soft foods to help you swallow them
- Use plastic 'ice cubes' to cool your drinks – they don't melt into your drink!
- Remember to count fluid rich foods such as soup, gravy, yoghurt, ice-cream and custard
- You do not need to count the water used to cook pasta or rice. Ensure they are drained well before eating.

Hints to help you reduce thirst:

- Check your blood sugar control (if you have diabetes) as high blood glucose (sugars) can make you more thirsty
- Avoid salty and spicy foods. Some examples of foods high in salt include processed meats, canned vegetables, packet and tinned soup, cheese, sauces, gravy, snack foods (salted nuts, crisps), pastry, and most takeaway foods and ready meals

- Avoid adding salt or high salt condiments such as ketchup to your food. Instead, try adding fresh or dried herbs to your meals, pepper, lemon or try marinating meat and fish to give them more flavour
- Try to suck on small ice cubes, ice-lollies, cubes of frozen squash or fizzy drinks – but remember to include these in your fluid allowance (count each ice cube as 15mls)
- Try sucking boiled sweets or lemon slices
- Eat mints or chew chewing gum
- Try rinsing your mouth with a mouthwash or ice cold water but do not swallow it
- Try eating frozen grapes or pineapple chunks (unless you have been advised to restrict these foods).

For further information:

Please contact the West Suffolk Dietetics Department: 01284 713609/01284 713668.

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