



Limiting Your Fluids to Stay Healthy

Limiting your fluids includes keeping track of how much fluid you get in your food and drinks every day. Limiting fluids helps prevent fluid from building up in your body, lowering stress on your body and reducing your risk of complications.

Along with your everyday drinks, many foods are full of fluids. Examples include ice cream, yogurt, gelatin, pudding, soups, sauces, and juicy fruits like melons and berries.

Limiting fluids is needed when you have one or more of the following health conditions:

- Heart problems, such as congestive heart failure (CHF)
- Kidney problems, such as end stage renal disease (ESRD) and dialysis
- Liver problems, such as cirrhosis
- Endocrine and adrenal gland disorders, such as adrenal insufficiency
- Conditions that cause the release of stress hormones
- Treatment with corticosteroid medicines
- Low levels of sodium in the blood (hyponatremia)

Your fluid prescription

Your care provider recommends that you limit fluids to _____ milliliters (mL) per day.

That is the same as _____ ounces
or _____ cups.

Signs of fluid retention

When your body holds on to (retains) fluid, you may have one or more of the symptoms listed below. If you notice any sudden change or worsening of symptoms, contact your healthcare provider.

- Swelling of hands, ankles, or feet
- Increased size of the veins in your neck
- Weight gain
- Increased urination (peeing)
- Harder to be active
- Shortness of breath
- Not hungry or feeling full faster
- Increased blood pressure
- Rapid heartbeat
- Dizziness, weakness, extreme tiredness, or confusion

Dietitian: _____

Phone: _____

Facility: _____

What counts as fluid?

- **Anything you drink:**

- Water
- Coffee
- Tea
- Soda pop
- Sports drinks
- Milk
- Liquid creamer
- Juice
- Fruit-flavored drinks, lemonade, punch
- Nutrition supplements like Ensure or Boost
- Liquid medicine
- Alcohol

- **Foods with a lot of fluid in them:**

- Soup
- Sauces
- Gravies
- Pudding
- Yogurt
- Salad dressing
- Syrup

- **Foods that melt down to liquid:**

- Gelatin
- Ice cream
- Frozen yogurt
- Sherbet
- Milkshakes/smoothies
- Popsicles
- Ice cubes
- 1 cup ice cubes or chips = ½ cup fluid melted = 120 mL

- **Any juicy fruits or vegetables:**

- 1 cup juicy fruit or veg = ½ cup fluid = 120 mL
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Melons (watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew, etc.)
- Berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, etc.)

Fluid measurements

1 ounce (oz) = 30 milliliters (mLs) = 2 tablespoons (tbsp)

1 cup (c) = 8 oz = 240 mL

4 c = 32 oz = 1 quart (qt) = 960 mL

1000 mL = 1 liter

48 oz = 6 c = 1½ qts = 1440 mL

64 oz = 8 c = 2 qts = ½ gallon (gal) = 1920 mL

Helpful hints

- **Count all fluids**, including those used to take your medicines.
- **Keep a fluid log.**
 - Record your daily fluids.
 - Make sure you know how much fluid your cups, bowls, mugs, and glasses hold. Use the same cup, bowl, mug, for every meal.
 - See the fact sheet titled [Heart Failure: Tracking Your Fluids](#) for more tips.
- **Weigh yourself daily.** A rapid change in weight can be caused by fluid gain or loss.
- **Eat a low salt diet.** Salty foods increase your thirst. Most of the health conditions that require a fluid restriction will also be improved by following a diet low in sodium (salt).
 - Aim for less than 2 grams (or 2000 mg) sodium daily. See the “Sodium-Restricted Daily Eating Plan: 2000 Milligrams or Less per Day” fact sheet for more information.
 - Talk to your doctor or registered dietitian if you have any questions about your need to follow a low sodium diet.
- **Plan your liquid intake for the day.**
 - Know how much will need to take medications, with meals, etc.
 - Know your preferred drinks and drinking patterns to more easily adjust to your fluid limits.
- **Drain all canned fruits and vegetables** so the juices do not count toward your daily total.
- **Take small sips.** It can make you feel like you’re drinking more than you actually are.
- **Brush your teeth twice daily and floss daily.**

Tips to reduce thirst and help a dry mouth

- Keep hard candies, mints and gum available. Some sugar-free varieties can be more thirst quenching.
- Brush your teeth.
- Chill mouthwash and gargle for a fresh feeling.
- Rinse your mouth with water (no swallowing).
- Prepare a measured amount of ice cubes to suck on. Flavor with lemon juice, if desired. This will count as some of your fluid amount, but will last longer and be more refreshing than a similar amount of fluid to drink.
- Add lemon or cucumber to your water to help quench your thirst.
- Suck on a lemon slice.
- For a refreshing treat, freeze or partially freeze pieces of fruit, such as lemon wedges, orange sections, peaches, berries, or grapes.
- Try chilled applesauce.
- Breathe through your nose and not your mouth.
- Avoid mid-day heat.

My next steps:



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This handout is intended for use during an appointment with a registered dietitian only, and is not meant for use by other clinicians.

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