

Managing **Fluid Intake**



Why is fluid management important?

Fluid overload can occur when too much fluid builds up in the body. This can cause health problems such as swelling, high blood pressure, stress on the heart, and even difficulty with breathing. If your healthcare provider has suggested that you limit the amount of fluid you consume, sometimes referred to as a “volume restriction” or “fluid restriction,” it can be tricky to know what this means. Learning how to limit fluids is important because it helps prevent excess fluid from building up throughout the body, which can help keep you feeling healthy and comfortable.

Fluids include all beverages and foods that are liquid at room temperature. Examples of fluids include water, ice, tea, coffee, carbonated beverages, alcohol, ice cream, ice pops, soup, and gelatin.

If you have too much fluid in your body, you may experience symptoms of fluid overload. These symptoms may include:



Sudden weight gain



New shortness of breath with normal activity or while lying down



Swelling in your face, arms, feet, or legs



Needing to use extra pillows at night



Swelling in your abdomen (often noted as stomach bloating, feeling unexpectedly full after a small meal, or a sudden increase in belt or waist size)



How can I limit my fluid intake?

The tips below can help you achieve your recommended fluid restriction. Talk to your doctor before limiting your fluid intake.

Drink less throughout the day.

- Freeze a water bottle and sip slowly as the water melts throughout the day.
- Instead of actual ice cubes, use plastic re-freezable cubes to cool your beverages.
- Take medications with applesauce or pudding instead of taking them with liquid.
- Plan ahead and spread your fluid intake throughout the day.
- Limit fluid intake during mealtimes. This will allow you to drink liquids between meals.



Avoid dry mouth.

- Use sugar-free hard candies, mints, gum, spray bottles, or a dry mouth oral rinse such as Biotene® to alleviate dry mouth.

Minimize sweating, which can increase thirst.

- Save physical activity for the coolest time of the day.
- Stay cool and out of the sun, and use a sun umbrella.
- Use a misting fan or place a cool towel around your neck.



Minimize your thirst.

- Try freezing fruits such as grapes, pineapples, or cherries to help quench thirst.
- Limit foods that are spicy or high in sodium (salt), as these can make you thirsty.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar levels controlled. High blood sugar levels can also make you thirsty.



Track your fluid intake and monitor your weight.

- Helpful hint: One cup of ice melts down to one cup of water.
- Every day after you get out of bed and urinate in the morning, weigh yourself and write this weight down in a log.
- If you notice a 2-to-3-pound weight gain in a 24-hour period (or 5 pounds in one week), contact your doctor.

If you have been told by your doctor that you need to limit your fluid intake or keep a strict fluid restriction and still have questions, be sure to let your doctor know at your next visit.