

DIALYSIS DIET AND FLUID LIMITS

What to limit, what to choose, and why it matters

What you eat and drink between treatments affects how you feel and how well dialysis works. **Your dialysis dietitian sets your exact limits from your lab results.** Use this sheet to learn the basics.

The key numbers

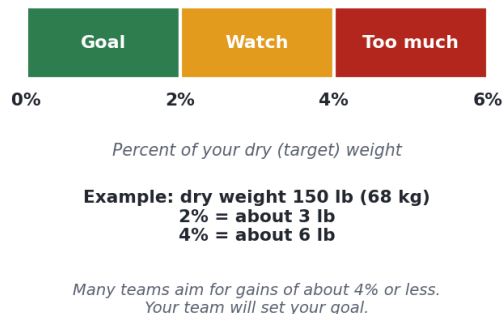
Nutrient	Why it matters on dialysis	Common starting point*	Where it hides
Fluid	Kidneys can no longer remove extra water. It builds up as swelling, high blood pressure, and breathlessness	Often about 32 oz (1 liter) a day if you make little or no urine; more if you still make urine	All liquids, soups, ice, gelatin, frozen treats, and very juicy fruit
Sodium (salt)	Raises thirst and blood pressure, so you drink more and gain more fluid	About 2,000 mg a day or less (some teams use up to 2,300 mg)	Canned soup, deli meat, frozen dinners, fast food, chips, pickles, soy sauce, seasoning salt
Potassium	Too much can cause dangerous heart rhythm problems, often with no warning	Often 2,000 to 3,000 mg a day; your lab results guide it	Bananas, oranges, potatoes, tomatoes, avocado, dried fruit, beans, and salt substitutes
Phosphorus	Builds up and pulls calcium from bones; can cause itching and hardened blood vessels	Often 800 to 1,000 mg a day, plus phosphate binders taken with meals	Dark colas, dairy, processed meats and cheese, nuts, beans, bran, and "phos" additives
Protein	Dialysis removes protein, so you need more to keep muscle and fight infection	About 1.0 to 1.2 g per kg of body weight a day (70 to 85 g for a 70 kg person)	Eggs, fish, poultry, and lean meat at every meal
Calories	Enough energy protects muscle; too many adds weight and raises diabetes risk	About 25 to 35 calories per kg a day, adjusted to your weight goals	Healthy oils, rice, pasta, bread, and other low-mineral foods

*Common examples for in-center hemodialysis only. Your targets may be different. Peritoneal dialysis, diabetes, and other conditions change them.

What counts toward your fluid limit

Water	Coffee, tea	Milk, shakes
Soup, broth	Juice, soda	Gelatin, pudding
Ice cream, ice pops	Ice (counts about half its volume)	Fruit that is very juicy

Weight gained between sessions



FOOD CHOICES AND WARNING SIGNS

Small swaps, thirst tips, and when to get help

Food choices

Topic	Go easy on	Often better choices
Potassium	Bananas, oranges and juice, potatoes, tomatoes, avocado, melon, dried fruit, beans, salt substitutes	Apples, berries, grapes, pineapple, cabbage, green beans, peppers, rice, pasta, white bread
Phosphorus	Dark colas, lots of dairy, processed and deli meats, processed cheese, nuts, dried beans, bran, anything with "phos" on the label	Fresh meat, poultry, fish, eggs (egg whites), white rice, lemon-lime soda, home-cooked meals
Sodium	Canned soup, deli meat, frozen dinners, fast food, chips, pickles, soy sauce, seasoning salt	Fresh foods; herbs, garlic, lemon, pepper, and salt-free blends with no potassium chloride
Protein	Skipping protein	A palm-sized portion of eggs, fish, poultry, or lean meat at each meal

Tips to manage thirst

- Each morning, **fill a pitcher with your daily fluid amount.** Pour out an equal amount every time you drink.
- Suck on ice chips (they count), sugar-free hard candy, or sugar-free gum; rinse your mouth without swallowing.
- Cut back on salt, and weigh yourself every morning.

Read the label

- **Sodium:** 5% Daily Value or less per serving is low; 20% or more is high.
- **Phosphorus:** check the ingredient list for words containing "phos" (such as sodium phosphate). Added phosphate is absorbed almost completely.
- **Potassium:** look for potassium chloride in "low-sodium" products.

Call your dialysis unit or 911 if you notice

- **Call 911:** chest pain, fainting, a very slow or irregular heartbeat, or severe weakness (possible high potassium); or severe shortness of breath (too much fluid)
- Call your unit the same day for fast weight gain, new swelling, cramping, or muscle weakness

My limits (from my dietitian)

Dry weight	_____	Fluid limit per day	_____
Sodium / potassium	_____	Phosphorus / protein	_____
Phosphate binder	_____	Dietitian and phone	_____