

## Controlling Cramps

Unfortunately at some time or another you may have experienced cramping either while on dialysis or when you were at home. While some cramping may not be preventable, there are other factors that contribute to cramps that are within your control.

If you gain high amounts of fluid in between your treatments, it is more likely you may cramp. This is because you are trying to remove a larger percentage of your total weight. This also places stress on your heart. Consider limiting the amount of fluid you drink between treatments.

Eating extra salt makes the next dialysis treatment harder because salt tends to “hold on” to fluid in your body. If you are on a sodium program, check with the staff to make sure you are not leaving with a high sodium level. This will cause you to want to drink more fluids between treatments.

If you decrease your time on dialysis or choose not to dialyze during a day or two during the week, cramps can occur because of the shift in fluids during treatment. Consider running your full treatment. (More information available in the Adequacy brochure).

Sometimes eating while on dialysis can cause cramps to occur. Consider eating a snack in the lobby before treatment. Lastly, if you have gained a little bit of body weight - share this information with the staff. Body weight gains that are interpreted as fluid gains can cause cramps because the scale doesn't tell the staff what part of your weight is fluid for removal and what part is body weight. We encourage you to communicate with the staff, ask questions, and seek information to afford yourself the best quality of life.

The study cited in the article was sponsored by the National Institutes of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. The title of the study was: Seasonal Variations in Clinical and Laboratory Variables among Chronic Hemodialysis Patients.



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## WHAT IS “DRY WEIGHT”



Promoting and facilitating high quality care standards for dialysis and kidney transplant patients in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.

### PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

## Background & Purpose

**D**ry weight is your weight without extra fluid. Because your dry weight can change over time and with the changes in the seasons, your kidney treatment team makes an estimate of what you would weigh if your kidneys worked correctly. This estimate is called your “dry weight”.

This brochure covers weight gain versus fluid gain, some of the changes you may experience with the change of the seasons and an explanation of some of the reasons persons on dialysis cramp.

### INSIDE!

- ★ Fluid Weight or Body Weight
- ★ Seasonal Changes
- ★ Combatting Cramps

# FLUID WEIGHT OR BODY WEIGHT

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Each time before your treatment, you step on the scale and write down your weight - or the staff write down your weight. This is compared to your dry weight and your weight from your last treatment. These weights may be the same, or they may be a little different.

While there are many factors that come into play in getting to your dry weight, telling the difference between real body weight and fluid weight is important.

### Fluid Weight

Fluid weight is the weight you gain between treatments from **liquids found in what you eat and drink**. It can range from a little (especially for people that still urinate), to a lot (based on eating foods high in fluid or by drinking a lot of fluid).

Fluid weight rises quickly between treatments and, depending on how much fluid you have to take off, all the fluid weight may not be removed.

Fluid weight also causes your blood pressure to rise.

If you have fluid that hasn't been removed during your treatment, some of the fluid can move into your tissue where you will notice some swelling (called edema).

### Body Weight

Body weight is gained slowly over time. A one pound weight gain in body weight can make a difference in your dialysis treatment.

Factors that influence body weight gain include:

- Getting adequate dialysis
- Eating better
- Illness or Infection
- Season changes

Getting adequate dialysis removes the toxins from your blood stream. With adequate toxin removal, you may eat more or feel like eating more than you did when you started dialysis. It is not uncommon for people starting dialysis to lose weight and then gain some weight back gradually over several months.

Illnesses and infections may cause you to lose weight for several reasons. First, you may not feel like eating much and second, when you have an illness or infection, your body burns more calories than usual. This is due to your body trying to fight the illness or infection. It is not uncommon for people that have been hospitalized to have a lower dry weight than when they went into the hospital. The important thing to remember

is that once the illness or infection is gone, you may feel like eating more and you may gain some real body weight back.

### Seasonal Changes

People on dialysis, just as people without kidney failure, tend to lose weight in the summer and gain weight in the winter. One recent study showed that not only did people on dialysis gain body weight in the winter months, but they also had higher fluid gains. This was especially true during the months of November and December. However, the authors were unable to determine if this was strictly due to the holidays.

If you notice you are eating less in the summer, notice that you have to put your belt on another notch, your shoes are a little looser or your watch band and/or rings fit differently, discuss this with your renal treatment team. Ask that they evaluate your dry weight because you may have gained or lost a little weight. In dialysis, a little weight, either gained or lost, makes a lot of difference.

**Dialysis does NOT help you lose body weight. Please do NOT ask the staff to increase your fluid goal in an attempt to “lose a little weight”. This could cause low blood pressure, a high pulse rate, nausea and vomiting, and possibly even blacking out.**