Sodium and Fluid Restriction

Some health problems need fluid restriction. If your caregiver has restricted your sodium or fluids, usually the amount you can drink depends on several things. These are:

- Your urine output.
- How much fluid you are retaining.
- Your blood pressure.

Sodium is part of the salt in the blood. The reason this may be restricted is because when you take in a lot of salt, you become thirsty. This makes it harder to limit your water intake.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF RETAINING FLUIDS INCLUDE:

- Weight increases.
- Swelling of your face, hands, legs, feet, and abdomen. This is called edema. Your whole body retains fluid but these are the easiest places to notice it.
- Increase in your blood pressure.
- Difficulty breathing (due to fluid building in the lungs).
- Making your heart work harder. This can lead to shortness of breath.

If you are on dialysis and are trying to remove large amounts of fluid at a time, side effects can be feeling sick to your stomach, getting cramps or having headaches.

TREATMENT AND HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Every 2 cups (500 ml) of fluid that is retained in the body becomes an extra 1 pound (1/2 kg) of body weight. All foods that are liquid at room temperature count as fluids. Examples are:

- Tea, coffee, pop.
- Lemonade, milk, water, juice.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Ice cream and ice milk.
- Cream, frozen yogurt, sherbet.
- Gravies.
- Ice cubes.
- Fruit and vegetable juices.
- Soup, broth.
- Popsicles, flavored geletin.

Other ideas to help with fluid restriction include:

- Read the labels on your foods to see how much sodium is in them. Make sure you know from your caregiver or dietitian how much sodium is allowed each day.
- Weigh yourself each morning with an empty bladder. Do this the first thing every morning before you eat or drink. If your weight is going up, you know then that you are retaining fluid.
- Freeze fruit juice or water in an ice cube tray. Use this as part of your fluid allowance.
- Lemon wedges, hard sour candies, chewing gum or breath spray may help to moisten your mouth.
- Add a slice of fresh lemon or lemon juice to water or ice. This helps satisfy your thirst.
- Try frozen fruits such as grapes or strawberries between meals.
- Use bread with a generous amount of margarine. The fat acts as a lubricant.
- Swallow your pills along with meals or soft foods. This helps you save your fluid for something you enjoy.
- Use small cups and glasses and learn to sip fluids slowly.
- Brushing your teeth often or rinsing your mouth with mouthwash is helpful so you feel less dry. Use breath spray.
- Keep your home cooler. Keep the air in your home as humid as possible. Dry air increases thirst.
- Avoid being out in the hot sun.

Avoid salt. This increases your thirst and makes fluid control more difficult. Foods high in sodium

include:

- Most canned foods including soups and meats.
- Most processed foods including most meats.
- Cheese.
- Dried pasta and rice mixes.
- Snack foods (chips, popcorn, pretzels, cheese puffs, salted nuts, etc.)
- Dips, sauces, and salad dressings.
- **DO NOT** use salt in cooking or with the meal.
- Cook with herbs and spices. Ask your caregiver if it is OK to use salt substitutes.
- Do not use spices that have salt in the name.
- Eat home prepared meals. Use fresh ingredients. Avoid canned, frozen, or packaged meals. When eating out, ask for dressings and sauces on the side.

HELP WITH YOUR FLUID RESTRICTION

- Each morning fill a jug with the amount of water you are allowed for the day.
- This water is used as a guideline for fluid allowance.
- Each time you take in fluid, pour an equal amount of water out of the container.
- This helps you to see how much fluid you are taking in. It also helps plan your fluid intake for the rest of the day.

CONVERSIONS TO HELP YOU MEASURE YOUR WATER INTAKE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1 cup equals 8 ounces (240cc).
1/3 cup equals 2-2/3 ounces (80cc).
3/4 cup equals 6 ounces (180cc).
1/4 cup equals 2 ounces (60cc).
2/3 cup equals 5-1/3 ounces (160cc).
2 tablespoons equals 1 ounce (30cc).
1/2 cup equals 4 ounces (120cc).

Document Released: 10/14/2008 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
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