



Your Target Weight



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Why all the interest in your weight?

You now know that healthy kidneys control the fluid balance in our bodies, and dialysis does this job when your kidneys stop working. Healthy kidneys work 24 hours every day removing extra fluid and waste products.

Fluids are heavy — one litre of water weighs one kilogram or about 2.2 pounds. An average cup of tea is 200 mL (millilitres), which is 0.2 kilograms. So if you have three cups of tea in one day you will gain 0.6 kilograms. This fluid accumulates with the other fluids you drink, so you can see how easily fluid weight can add up.

When kidneys don't work properly urine production slows down and sometimes stops completely, so the need to remove the remaining fluid in dialysis becomes extremely important. This is why a target weight is so important. Tracking the exact amount of fluid that goes in and comes out of your body isn't practical, so we use a target weight to tell the story of how much extra fluid is left in your body.



Your Target Weight

What is a target weight?

Target weight is also sometimes called:

- Dry weight
- True weight
- Ideal weight
- Goal weight

You may notice your nurse or doctor using any of these names, but they all mean the same thing. For this manual we will use the term *target weight*.

Target weight is the weight you are aiming to achieve on your dialysis run, or the weight you will be at the end of your hemodialysis treatment. Since it is the weight at the end of your treatment you should have no extra fluid in your body, and your blood pressure should be within a normal range.

Your target weight will be determined by your doctor. This target weight can change if you gain or lose muscle or body weight. By weighing yourself before and after your dialysis treatments and monitoring your blood pressure and other symptoms, you will be able figure out if your target weight needs to be changed.

Where does all the fluid go?

Fluid accumulates in every person slightly differently but there are a few signs we typically see when someone has extra fluid. You may have already noticed these symptoms when you have extra fluid.

Some of the places fluid ends up are:

- Around your lungs and heart — making breathing difficult
- Around your feet and ankles — you may notice your shoes don't seem to fit.
- Around your hands and fingers — you may have difficulty taking off rings.

How to calculate your target weight

Target weight is worked out in kilograms. One kilogram equals one litre (L) of fluid. If you are calculating a volume that is less than a litre, the measurement will be done in millilitres (mL). For example, if you have one glass of water, this is equal to about 200 mL or 0.2 of a kilogram (kg).

Note: 25mLs is equal to approximately one ounce.





Your Target Weight



Target weight calculation

Pre-dialysis weight _____ kg

Minus target weight - _____ kg

Equals = _____ kg

Add for rinse-back + _____ kg

Add for _____ + _____ kg

Equals = _____ kg**

**This is the number you program into the machine under _____

When would your target weight change?

After gaining or losing real body weight you will need to change your target weight.



Note: Adjusting and changing your target weight can get quite complicated because more than one thing could be happening at the same time. Even if you are sure about what you need to do, it is a good idea to talk to your training nurse or doctor about what is going on.

Signs of fluid gain (fluid overload)

Some signs or symptoms of having too much fluid or “fluid overload” are:

- Higher than usual blood pressure
- Headaches
- Swelling around ankles or hands
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Cramping while on dialysis
- Sudden excessive weight gain

If you experience these symptoms, in most cases dropping your target weight by 0.5 kg will help you to feel better. However, it is wise to check this with your training nurse or doctor before doing it on your own.



Your Target Weight

What to do if you are short of breath

If you find it difficult to catch your breath, try to:

- Relax
- Sit in an upright position
- Take slow, deep breaths

If you continue to have difficulty breathing, call your doctor or renal unit, or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Signs of fluid loss (dehydration)

Some signs or symptoms of dehydration or having too little fluid include:

- Low blood pressure
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dizziness
- Cramping in your legs
- Light-headedness
- Feeling “washed out”

If you experience these symptoms, in most cases increasing your target weight by 0.5 kilograms will help you to feel better. However, it is wise to check this with your training nurse or doctor before doing it on your own.

How much can you drink?

The amount you can drink will depend on how much urine you make each day and how often you dialyze. If you dialyze frequently, either short daily or nocturnally, you should be drinking more fluid. Your health care team will help you figure out what your daily fluid intake should be

Discussion with your training nurse

Regardless of how long or often you dialyze you need to be aware that taking off excessive amounts of fluid over one hemodialysis run can cause damage to your heart. Talk to your nurse about what your safe fluid range should be.

I can safely take off up to _____ kg or _____ ultrafiltration rate per hemodialysis run.



Therefore my fluid goal should be approximately _____ litres of fluid a day.



Your Target Weight

Are you thirsty?

Using too much salt or eating salty foods causes thirst. Limit your intake of salty foods like canned or processed foods to help control your thirst. Ask your dietitian for a list of low salt (sodium) foods.

If you are diabetic, high blood sugar levels can cause thirst. Monitor your blood sugars and aim for good control. Some medications can cause dry mouth. Check with your pharmacist or doctor.

Tips for fluid control if you are unable to dialyze more than three times a week

If you find it difficult to catch your breath, try to:

- Use smaller cups and glasses
- Divide fluids between all meals and snacks, sip fluids slowly
- Measure the cups and glasses that you commonly use to see how much fluid they hold
- Drink only when you are thirsty, not out of habit or to be social
- Suck on ice chips (1 cup of ice = $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of water)
- Freeze juice or other beverages in an ice cube tray
- Freeze fruits such as strawberries or grapes to suck on when thirsty
- Brush your teeth often
- Rinse your mouth with cold water but do not swallow
- Use a humidifier if the air is dry
- Try eating a small snack such as a slice of bread with margarine and jelly, food may get rid of the thirst just as well as fluids.
- Keep busy, this may keep your mind off the desire to drink.
- Avoid salt and salty foods. Use unsalted spices, herbs, vinegar or lemon juice to flavour food instead of salt.



Your Target Weight

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the walls of the arteries, which carry the blood from your heart to all parts of your body. With each beat of your heart (about 60–70 times a minute at rest) blood is pumped into the arteries. Your blood pressure is highest when the heart beats or pumps blood. This is called systolic pressure. When your heart is at rest, in between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is called diastolic pressure.

Blood pressure is always given with two numbers, one representing the systolic pressure and one representing the diastolic pressure. The systolic pressure is the first or top number, and the diastolic pressure is the second or bottom number. If your blood pressure is 120/80, you say that it is “120 over 80.” Blood pressure changes during the day. It is lowest when you sleep and rises when you get up. It also can rise when you are excited, nervous, or active.

A B/P goal for dialysis patients is between 120 and 139 systolic pressure and 75 and 90 diastolic pressure for post dialysis readings while you are sitting (Bakris, G, 2004. *The Kidney and Hypertension*).

What is low blood pressure?

Typically, low B/P is any reading below 110/60.

You should consult your nurse if your B/P is lower than: _____

Some signs of low blood pressure are:

- Light-headedness
- Feeling thirsty
- Nausea
- Cramps while on or off dialysis
- Fainting spells





Your Target Weight

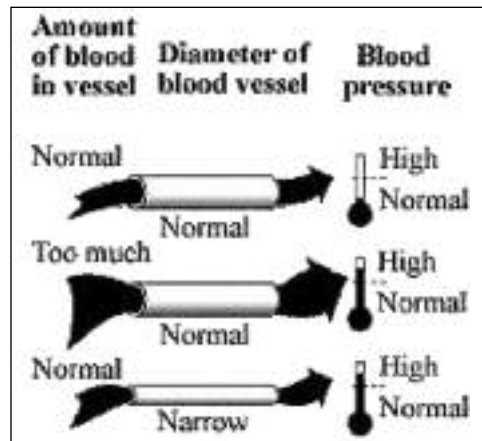
What is high blood pressure?

Typically, high B/P is any reading above 140/80.

You should consult your nurse if your B/P is higher than: _____

Some signs of high blood pressure are:

- Pounding headaches
- Seeing spots
- Swelling in hands or feet
- Facial flushing



High Blood pressure can result from too much fluid in normal blood vessels or from a normal amount of fluid in narrow blood vessels.

Case Study

1



Imagine that you were sick with a cold for a week and were only able to eat very little. Then one morning sometime later, when you get on the scale before dialysis you notice that your weight hasn't changed from your post dialysis weight (from your last dialysis treatment) two days before. When you take your blood pressure you find it is high (155/95) and you notice some swelling around your eyes.

What should you do?

Should you increase or decrease your target weight?



Your Target Weight

Imagine that you have been doing nocturnal dialysis for three weeks and you have been enjoying many new foods. Your wife has noticed that your pants are a bit tighter than normal. Earlier that morning, while you were finishing dialysis treatment, you experienced some cramps in your calf and felt a bit dizzy just before coming off.

That evening when you got on the scale before dialysis you noticed that you were three kg above your goal weight and your blood pressure was 100/53.

What should you do?

Should you increase or decrease your target weight?

Case Study

2

