



Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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Q: How can I cope with thirst or food cravings?

A: You are not alone if you have trouble with your fluid limit or you are craving foods that are not the best choices for you. These are some of the biggest challenges people on dialysis face on a day-to-day basis. There is hope, though. Many other patients have found ways to cope, and you can, too.

Some tips for dealing with thirst are:

- Eat less salt to reduce thirst. Read food labels to find “hidden” salt or sodium in foods that may not seem salty.
- Freeze plastic cocktail ice cubes and suck on them.
- Keep a spray bottle of water or lemonade in the fridge and spritz your mouth with it.
- Suck on hard candies. Mint candies can freshen breath, too.
- If you smoke, quit.
- Brush your teeth after every meal to get rid of any bad taste in your mouth.
- Freeze drinks into slushies or popsicles—the cold will satisfy your thirst faster.
- Take pills with applesauce or pudding instead of water.

Food cravings can often be helped with moderation. One slice of tomato on a sandwich or 1/4 of a banana cut up on cereal can be a treat that will help you feel less deprived.

Portion size is key. Your dietitian can help you learn how much of a food you can fit into your meal plan and still stay healthy.

What I can do to cope with thirst and food cravings:

- Ask a pharmacist if any of my drugs have thirst or dry mouth as a side effect. If so, ask my doctor if a different drug might work.
- Ask my dietitian and other patients for their tips.
- Try one new idea each day to see which ones work best for me.
- Look for substitutes that taste the same, like chocolate rice milk instead of chocolate dairy milk.
- Try one new food each week to find some new favorites.
- Learn how much potassium, phosphorus, and sodium I can have each day, so I can “save up” my allowance for a treat.
- Think about doing peritoneal dialysis (PD) or daily or nocturnal home hemodialysis so I can have a more relaxed diet and less fluid limits.
- Visit module 9 of Kidney School™: *Nutrition and Fluids* at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more.