



# Kidney Q&A

4-12 months

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What is *my* role in controlling my weight gain and blood pressure?

## Q: What is *my* role in controlling my weight gain and blood pressure

**A:** Each time your heart beats, blood pushes against the walls of your arteries. This is blood pressure. Healthy kidneys control blood pressure by keeping fluid levels in balance in your body, and by making a hormone called *renin*.

**High blood pressure problems:** High blood pressure can cause strokes, heart attacks, and kidney damage—in fact, high blood pressure is the number two cause of kidney failure. Kidney failure can also *cause* high blood pressure.

**Low blood pressure problems:** If you gain too much fluid weight, a lot of fluid must be taken off at each hemodialysis (HD) treatment. This can cause low blood pressure as you finish your HD treatment—and you may feel dizzy, faint, sick to your stomach, or have painful muscle cramps.

**Dialysis and fluid:** Dialysis is not as good as healthy kidneys at removing extra fluid. Following your fluid limit is one thing you can do to reduce the burden on your body, keep your blood pressure at a healthy level—and have less chance of cramps during treatment. Avoiding salty foods will reduce thirst, so it is easier to follow your fluid limit.

Because peritoneal dialysis (PD) removes fluid several times a day and 7 days a week, PD patients may not have trouble with fluid control. This may be a factor for you to

think about when you choose between HD and PD.

**What can I can do to control my fluid weight and blood pressure:**

- Ask my doctor about the differences between HD and PD for fluid limits.
- Ask my doctor about my target blood pressure and write it here: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Read food labels for sodium content and stay in my daily sodium limit.
- Ask my doctor or pharmacist if any of my drugs causes dry mouth or thirst as a side effect, and if so, if a different drug would work.
- Take my blood pressure pills even if I don't *feel* like my pressure is up.
- Exercise 3 or more times a week for 30 minutes, with my doctor's okay.
- Think of three things I can do to calm myself, so I don't overeat or raise my blood pressure: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Lose weight if I am overweight.
- Visit module 13 of Kidney School™: *Heart Health, Blood Pressure, and Fluids* at [www.kidneyschool.org](http://www.kidneyschool.org) to learn more about controlling my blood pressure.