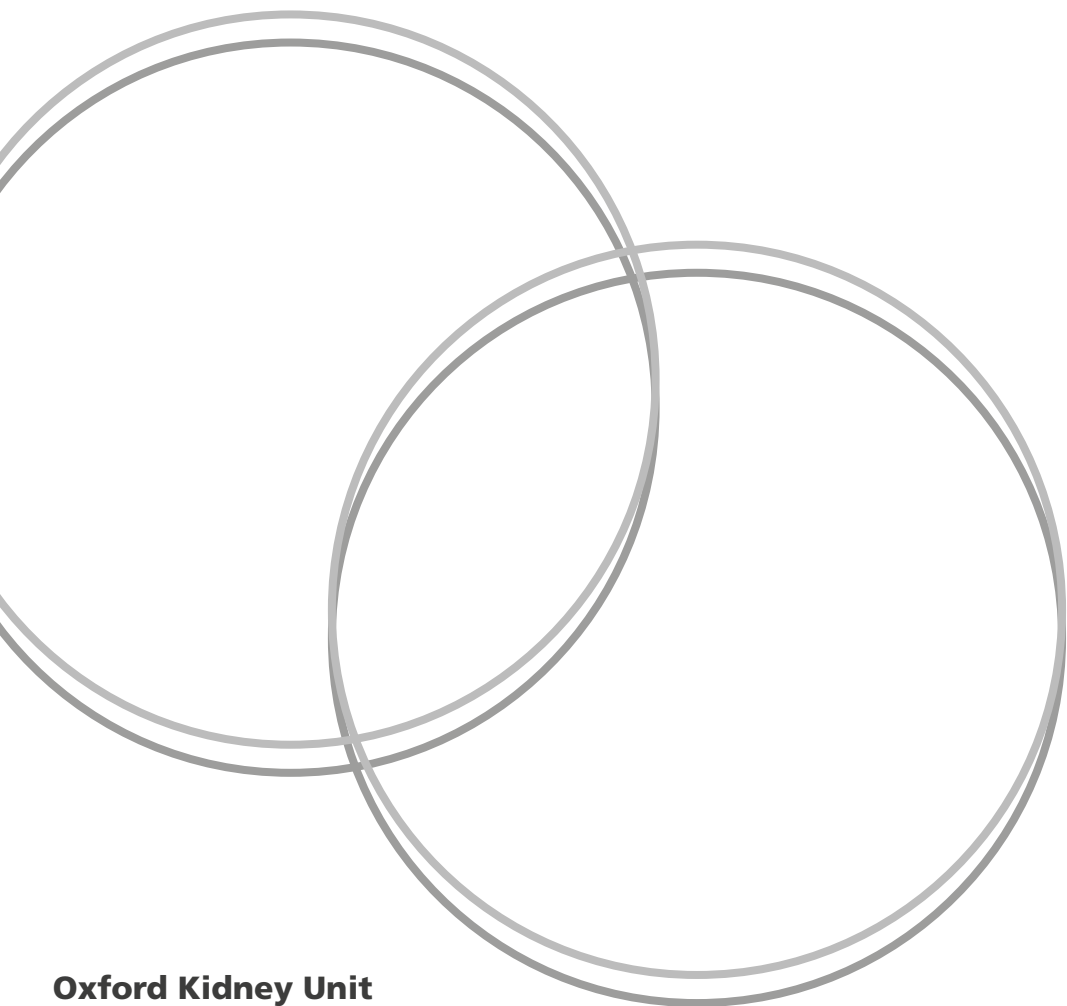




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Your Blood Pressure and Haemodialysis

**Information for people  
on haemodialysis**



**Oxford Kidney Unit**



If you are on dialysis, this leaflet will provide you with information on how to manage your blood pressure.

## **What is blood pressure?**

Blood pressure is the force blood exerts against your artery walls. Your blood pressure is measured using two numbers: the upper number is the systolic reading which is measured when your heart beats and the lower number, diastolic, is measured when your heart rests.

Blood pressure is measured in millimetres of mercury (mmHg). If your blood pressure reading is 125/65mmHg, this will be read as '125 over 65'. Normal blood pressure is around 130/80mmHg.

## **Why is it important to measure blood pressure?**

People on dialysis are more likely to develop high blood pressure, which is also known as hypertension. High blood pressure is a risk factor for heart attacks, heart failure, heart valve disease, strokes and poor blood supply to the legs. Maintaining your blood pressure in the normal range will help reduce your risk of developing these conditions.

Some people on dialysis may also experience low blood pressure, which is known as hypotension.

There is a leaflet called **How to measure your blood pressure at home**. Please ask your kidney team for a copy.

There is also more information about blood pressure on the Oxford Kidney Unit Website.

## Why might I have high blood pressure?

In dialysis patients, fluid balance and blood pressure are linked. When you have excess fluid in your body, water is pushed from your blood into your surrounding tissues. This is more likely to happen in people with chronic kidney disease, especially in people on dialysis who pass little to no urine.

Excess fluid can cause high blood pressure, as well as swelling in your ankles and legs (known as oedema). Sometimes fluid can accumulate in the lungs (pulmonary oedema) and cause difficulty breathing.

Dialysis is the only way to remove excess fluid. Your blood pressure will fluctuate during dialysis and will usually be lower than when you started dialysis. Your blood pressure is measured before, during and after haemodialysis.

Getting the balance right between passing urine and drinking is important and your dialysis nurse will talk to you about this. There is also a leaflet available **Managing your fluid balance, for people with chronic kidney disease**. Please ask your nurse for a copy.

## Why might I have low blood pressure? when on haemodialysis?

If your fluid intake between haemodialysis sessions is excessive we have to remove the extra fluid on haemodialysis faster. This may cause your blood pressure to drop and make you feel dizzy, sick and suffer muscle cramps. It is important to control fluid intake between haemodialysis sessions, to try to prevent low blood pressure on haemodialysis.

If you have low pressure before you start haemodialysis, your dialysis nurse will explain why this may be happening and what they can do to help you while you are on dialysis.

## **Will I need to take blood pressure medication?**

Most people on dialysis will need some blood pressure tablets to maintain a normal blood pressure. You normally take these on the days when you do not have haemodialysis. Please ask your nurse if you are not sure which tablets you are supposed to be taking.

Blood pressure tablets work in different ways and you may need to try different tablets to see what suits you best. Your kidney team will talk to you about these.

## **What is your dry weight?**

Dry weight is your flesh weight after dialysis without any excessive fluid. Blood pressure measurements taken after dialysis are a good indicator of whether we are removing enough fluid and whether your dry weight target is correct.

## **Reducing your dry weight to improve your blood pressure**

High blood pressure is usually, but not always, caused by too much fluid in the body. Reducing your dry weight helps you have a good blood pressure. Some people might be able to reduce or stop their blood pressure medications and may have a normal blood pressure when they reach their true dry weight.

## **What will happen during haemodialysis?**

When you come for haemodialysis, we calculate the amount of fluid that needs to be removed. This is the difference between your weight before dialysis and your target dry weight. 1kg of weight on the scales is the same as 1 litre of fluid in your body.

Your nurse will aim to remove this fluid during dialysis. They will also ask you how you are feeling, whether you have any ankle swelling or shortness of breath, and will measure your blood pressure.

Your dry weight may need to be adjusted if you have lost or gained weight that is not due to excess fluid. If your blood pressure remains high (such as 140/90 after dialysis) on several occasions, your dialysis nurse or doctor may reduce your dry weight.

Changes to your dry weight will be discussed with you to make sure your haemodialysis experience is as comfortable as possible and that your blood pressure is well managed. Should you have any questions about your dry weight or your blood pressure management, please speak to your dialysis nurse.

## **What can I do to improve my blood pressure if it is high?**

- Keep to your fluid allowance (how much you can drink in 24 hours).
- Reduce salt intake in your diet.
- Exercise within your capability. Any form of physical exercise that you are able to undertake is likely to benefit your overall health and potentially, your blood pressure.
- If you are diabetic, keep your blood glucose under control.
- Take your medication as it has been prescribed.

## **What can I do to improve my blood pressure if it is low?**

- Stand up gradually and avoid standing for long periods of time.
- Be aware of your dry weight. If you are below this then you may be able to drink a little more fluid. Please discuss this with your dialysis nurse.
- Wear support stockings, if recommended.
- Eat smaller meals more often.

## Useful websites

### **Oxford Kidney Unit**

Lots of information about the Oxford Kidney Unit for patients and carers.

Website: [www.ouh.nhs.uk/oku](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/oku)

### **Kidney Patient Guide**

Information for patients with kidney failure and those who care for them.

Website: [www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk](http://www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk)

### **Kidney Care UK**

A charity which has lots of practical support and information for people with kidney disease.

Website: [www.kidneycareuk.org](http://www.kidneycareuk.org)

### **Six Counties Kidney Patients Association**

The SCKPA is run for patients by patients or family members.

They offer support to people suffering from kidney disease or who are on dialysis. They work closely with the Oxford Kidney Unit and have branches in Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, and Milton Keynes, and parts of Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Berkshire.

Website: [www.sixcountieskpa.org.uk](http://www.sixcountieskpa.org.uk)

### **National Kidney Federation**

A charity which has lots of practical support and information for people with kidney disease.

Website: [www.kidney.org.uk](http://www.kidney.org.uk)

### **BloodPressureUK.org**

This website has lots of information and tips on blood pressure management.

Website: [www.bloodpressureuk.org/your-blood-pressure](http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/your-blood-pressure)



## **Contacts**

### **Main Haemodialysis Unit**

**Churchill Hospital**

Telephone: 01865 225 807

### **Tarver Haemodialysis Unit**

**Churchill Hospital**

Telephone: 01865 225 695

### **Milton Keynes Haemodialysis Unit**

Telephone: 01908 996 496

### **Stoke Mandeville Haemodialysis Unit**

Telephone: 01296 316 996

### **Banbury Haemodialysis Unit**

Telephone: 01295 229 811 or 01295 224 130

### **High Wycombe Haemodialysis Unit**

Telephone: 01494 426 347

### **Swindon Haemodialysis Unit**

Telephone: 01793 605 286

### **Whitehouse Dialysis Unit**

Telephone: 01295 228 552 or 01295 228 553

### **Renal Dietitians**

**Churchill Hospital**

Telephone: 01865 225 061





## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



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