

Staying Cool in the Summer – Tips for Dialysis Patients



We experienced the hottest day on record for British Columbia in 2021. Warm summer days are great, but sometimes they can get too warm! When you are on dialysis, hot days can be challenging. You may feel dehydrated and thirsty, but drinking more fluid is not the best way to stay cool. It can push you over your recommended daily fluid allowance and cause complications.

A few tips to stay safe this summer:

Never sit in a car that is not running: Sometimes dialysis patients sit in their car to rest after dialysis. Even with the windows down, the temperature is much warmer than outside. Just a few minutes in your car can be very dangerous. Try to find a bench in the shade outside if you need to rest. When driving, use the air conditioner or roll the windows down if you don't have air conditioning. Avoid waiting in a parked car that is not running while a family member runs errands.

Outdoor activities: Avoid activities outside during the heat of the day. If you like to walk, find an air-conditioned place such as the mall or a treadmill at the gym.

Staying cool: Try to stay inside when the day is at its hottest. (i.e. between 10:00 am and 5:00 pm) If possible, use a fan or air conditioner to keep cool. You may want to put ice in front of a fan to cool the air. Put wash cloths in the freezer to place on your neck or forehead; this may help you cool down. Visit air conditioned places such as the mall or the library.

Fluid intake: People on dialysis are more sensitive to hot weather, but you could harm yourself by drinking too much fluid. Ask your dialysis team how much you should drink when the weather is hot. You can limit your thirst by avoiding salt, sugar, and sports drinks (often higher in sodium).

Try some of these ideas if you need to limit your fluid intake:



- Use frozen treats like popsicles to cut the amount you drink.



- Drink cold liquids instead of hot ones.



- Snack on low-potassium vegetables and fruits that are ice cold, like chilled sliced, cucumbers, pears, apples or strawberries.



- Try freezing grapes or blueberries for a cold, refreshing snack.



- Use small cups or glasses for your beverages.



- Suck on ice cubes to help fluids last longer



- Try swallowing pills with cold applesauce instead of a liquid.

Talk to your kidney team if you have questions or need more information.