

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HYPONATREMIA

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## What Is Hyponatremia?

Hyponatremia is a condition that occurs when sodium levels in the body are too low. Sodium, or salt, is a mineral in the blood. Sodium helps to control the amount of water in your body. When sodium levels are low, your body holds onto too much water. Too much water in the body can be dangerous and cause serious health problems. Low sodium levels can be caused by:

- Certain medications, like water pills (diuretics) or some antidepressants
- Some health conditions, like heart failure, kidney disease, or liver problems
- Drinking too much water after intense exercise, such as running a marathon

## What Are the Warning Signs of Hyponatremia?

- Sometimes hyponatremia has no symptoms.
- Other times, symptoms include nausea, confusion, headache, or vomiting.
- On rare occasions, symptoms are more severe. Severe symptoms can include seizures, temporary loss of mental abilities, and trouble breathing.

## How Is Hyponatremia Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will collect a blood and urine sample to test sodium levels.
- Imaging tests may be ordered to check for signs of hyponatremia. These tests may include an x-ray to check for normal fluid levels in your lungs or an MRI of the brain to look for things that might cause hyponatremia (for example, brain tumors).

## How Is Hyponatremia Treated?

- In mild cases, your doctor may simply advise you to drink less fluid or change your medications.
- Sometimes your doctor will give you a medicine that helps reduce the amount of water in your body.
- In more severe cases, you may need to go to the hospital for diagnosis and treatment. An IV filled with a salt-based fluid may be used to increase your sodium levels.



## Questions for My Doctor

- Do I need to drink less water?
- Should I eat more salt?
- Do I need to change my diet?
- When can I expect my symptoms to go away?
- Could this cause any long-term problems?
- Should I change the medicines I take?
- How can I prevent this from happening in the future?
- When should I contact my doctor?

## Bottom Line

- Hyponatremia is a condition that occurs when sodium levels in the body are too low. The sodium in your blood helps to control the amount of water in your body. When sodium is too low, there is too much water in your body. This can be dangerous and cause health problems.
- Symptoms of hyponatremia can range from headache or nausea to serious confusion and seizures.
- To check for hyponatremia, your doctor will collect a blood and urine sample. He or she may also order further testing, like x-ray or an MRI.
- Treatment will depend on how severe your symptoms are. Treatment could include using an IV to increase your sodium levels, taking a medicine to lessen the water in your body, or simply drinking less water.

## For More Information



### Medline Plus

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000394.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000394.htm)

### National Kidney Foundation

<https://www.kidney.org/atoz/content/Hyponatremia>