Patient information

Fluid balance monitoring

Water is essential for life

Water has lots of different functions in the body. It is an essential component of blood and helps to transport nutrients around the body, it also forms urine to help to remove waste products and acts as a lubricant to help absorb shocks in our joints, for example.

As adults, over half of our body is fluid. Fluid is another word for the liquids we take into our body in the form of drinks, some of the foods we eat and some medications. The amount of fluid in the human body is controlled mainly by the kidneys.

Maintaining the correct balance of fluid is crucial to health and the function of vital organs. Illness can alter this balance. Monitoring your fluid balance helps us to monitor ~~acute~~ illness and allows us to avoid dehydration and other unwanted complications.

Fluid balance monitoring consists of recording your **intake** and **output** of fluid, in order to accurately measure the balance.

Patient and carers / relatives who are willing, are encouraged to support and assist in the fluid balance record. You will be made aware of your individual needs for fluid. The team will ask you regularly how much you have had to drink, and then they will record this accurately in the chart.

What counts as a fluid?

All drinks and anything that is liquid at room temperature counts towards your fluid intake. This also includes some products that are classed as foods. Examples include:

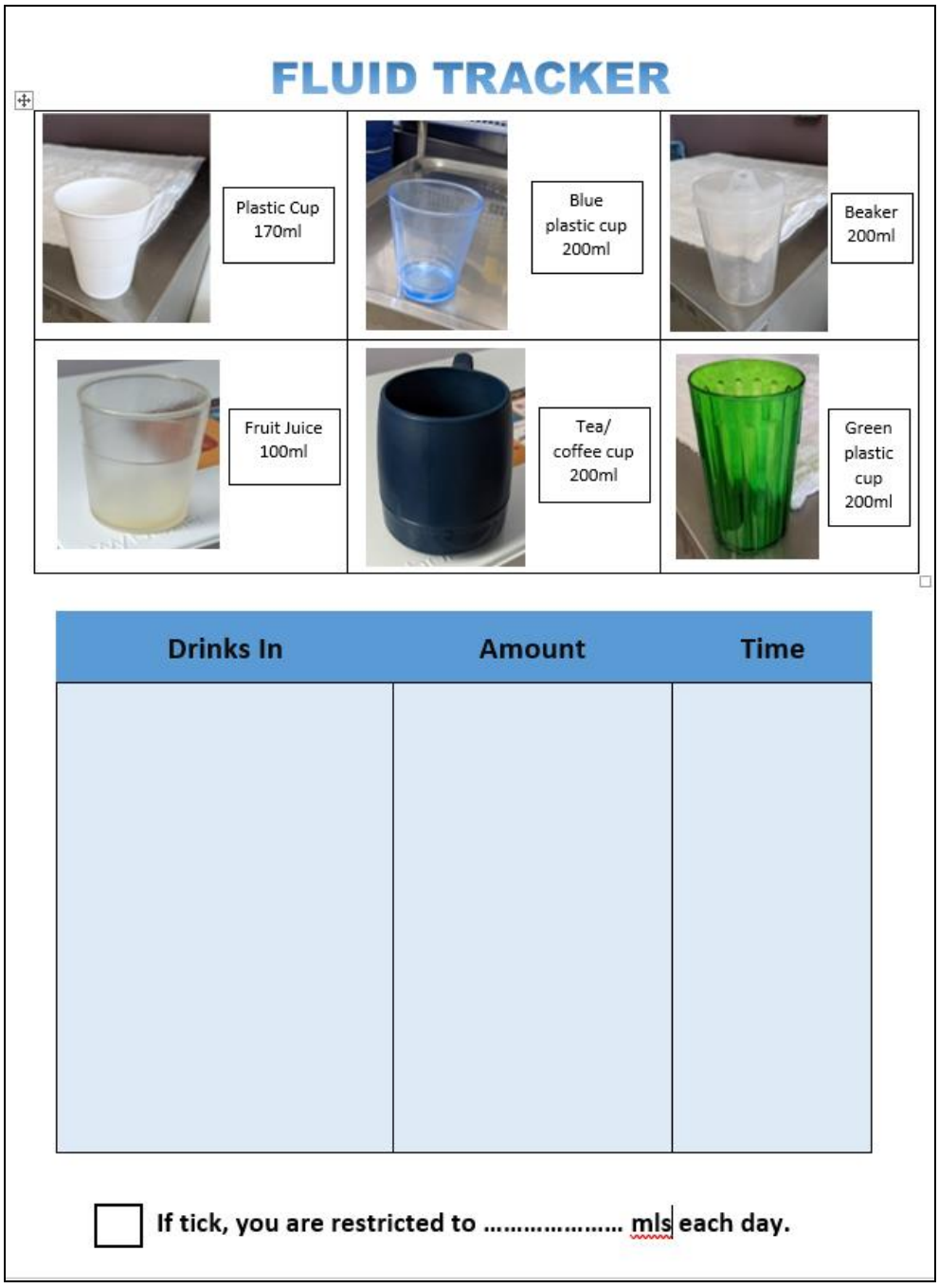
- Water
- Tea / coffee, soft drinks and milk
- Ice cream, ice lollies and jelly
- Soups and sauces

- Milk added to cereals and porridge
- Prescribed oral nutritional supplement drinks (eg Fresubin Energy)

The dietitian or ward nurses will guide you if some of the above fluids need to be prioritised over others.

How much fluid is in a cup?

If you are willing and able, you will be encouraged to support and assist the team to accurately record your fluid balance. Education and support will be provided and a fluid tracker form (see below) will be given to record intake, for example, how many glasses consumed throughout the day.



FLUID TRACKER

Plastic Cup 170ml	Blue plastic cup 200ml	Beaker 200ml
Fruit Juice 100ml	Tea/ coffee cup 200ml	Green plastic cup 200ml

Drinks In	Amount	Time

☐ If tick, you are restricted to …… mls each day.

Output

As part of the fluid balance monitoring, we will need to measure all your fluid output. This includes any losses like urine, vomit, diarrhoea, stoma, drains or nasogastric tube output.

You will be asked to pass urine into a measuring pot so that the ward team can record this accurately.

You can help by informing staff when you have passed urine, or if you have had any diarrhoea or vomiting.

Please ask staff for additional measuring pots if needed.

Daily weights

Depending on your condition, we may need to weigh you daily, as this helps to track fluid balance.

The daily weighing is considered to be a reliable method of assessing who may be at risk of fluid imbalances and is a way of tracking your developments.

What is fluid restriction?

Fluid restriction is when an individual is advised to take a limited amount of fluid each day. This might be recommended by the doctors to prevent fluid building up in the body, or to reduce excess fluid that is already there.

This will be patient and condition specific: not every patient will have a restriction. You will be informed if this applies to you and advice will be adapted to your personal needs. Some examples of conditions that may need fluid restriction include kidney disease (especially for patients on dialysis) and heart failure.

The amount of fluid restriction will depend on several factors, including the patient's body size, their health conditions and kidney function.

Please speak to your doctor or your nurse if you require any further information.

NICE guidelines [CG174, Dec 2013] - Intravenous fluid therapy in adults in hospital.
Shepherd, A. (2011). Measuring and managing fluid balance. Nursing Times, 12-16.
Pilsworth, J., & Scales, K. (2008). The importance of fluid balance in clinical practice. *Nursing Standard*, pp. 50-57.

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