Hyponatremia
Symptoms and treatment

This handout explains hyponatremia, and how to manage your sodium levels.

What is hyponatremia?
Hyponatremia occurs when the level of sodium (salt) in your blood is too low. Sodium is an electrolyte that helps control the amount of water in and around your cells.

What are the symptoms?
- Early symptoms include nausea, fatigue (feeling very tired), muscle cramps, vomiting, headaches, and dizziness.
- Late symptoms can be very serious. They include seizures and coma. If you have very low blood levels of sodium, you can die.

What causes it?
About 5% of patients (5 out of 100) with hyponatremia get the symptoms after having pituitary surgery. Most times, symptoms occur 7 to 9 days after surgery. But, they can start 3 to 13 days after surgery.

How is it treated?
For 1 week, you will need to:
- Drink no more than 1 to 1.5 liters (34 to 51 ounces) of fluid a day. This total includes all fluids you drink.
- Increase how much salt you eat, based on your doctor’s advice.

This treatment usually eases the condition. You will have 1 or 2 blood tests during the week to check your sodium levels.

We will check your blood sodium levels 2 to 4 days after you finish treatment.
After 1 week, you can return to your usual intake of fluids and salt. Your doctor will check your blood sodium levels 2 to 4 days later.

**How can I prevent hyponatremia?**

- If you sweat a lot, drink fluids that contain salt and other electrolytes. Do not push yourself to drink fluids.

- If you had pituitary surgery:
  - Have your sodium levels checked 5 to 7 days after surgery. You can use a lab that is close to your home.
  - We may ask you to have another blood test (*osmolality*) and urine test (sodium and osmolality), if needed.

**Follow-up**

Follow up with your provider, or as advised.

**When to Call**

Call your provider right away if you:

- Feel very tired
- Faint
- Feel dizzy
- Lose your appetite
- Have nausea or vomiting
- Feel confused or forgetful
- Have muscle spasms, cramping, or twitching
- Have seizures
- Have trouble walking