

# 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

### Question?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Pituitary Program/  
UWMedicine/Neurosurgery  
clinic 206.598.5637