Why Cutting Salt Isn't Fixing Your Swelling Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Swelling as an Early Warning Sign

Your ankles are swollen again, your Your ankles are swollen again, your [music] rings feel tight, you wake up [music] rings feel tight, you wake up and your face looks puffy, your shoes and your face looks puffy, your shoes barely fit by afternoon, and you're barely fit by afternoon, and you're carrying this heaviness in your legs carrying this heaviness in your legs that no one else can see, but you feel that no one else can see, but you feel it every single step. [music] it every single step. [music] And here's the part that gets to me. By And here's the part that gets to me. By the time most people notice that a the time most people notice that a swelling, [music] swelling, [music] their kidneys have already lost more their kidneys have already lost more than half of their filtering power.

than half of their filtering power. Half, and nobody told them that it was Half, and nobody told them that it was happening. So, why is your body holding happening. So, why is your body holding on to all this fluid? And more on to all this fluid? And more importantly, what if the answer isn't importantly, what if the answer isn't just stick another water pill? What if just stick another water pill? What if there is something deeper going on that there is something deeper going on that nobody's investigating? [music] nobody's investigating?

Introduction to the Wellness Focus Approach

[music] That's exactly what we are going to That's exactly what we are going to unpack today. unpack today. >> Welcome to Wellness Focus [music] with >> Welcome to Wellness Focus [music] with Dr. Bisma. I'm Dr. Bisma Irfan, a Dr. Bisma. I'm Dr. Bisma Irfan, a physician on a mission to help you break physician on a mission to help you break free from symptom management and step free from symptom management and step into a life of thriving health.

into a life of thriving health. Together, we [music] will uncover Together, we [music] will uncover simple, powerful ways to prevent simple, powerful ways to prevent disease, restore energy, [music] and disease, restore energy, [music] and take control of your health naturally.

take control of your health naturally. Your prescription for vitality starts Your prescription for vitality starts now.

Why Fluid Retention Is More Than Kidney Function

>> I have been looking [music] at this >> I have been looking [music] at this problem differently for years now, and problem differently for years now, and what I keep finding [music] is that what I keep finding [music] is that fluid retention and kidney disease is fluid retention and kidney disease is almost never about one thing. It is a almost never about one thing. It is a whole system crying out for attention.

whole system crying out for attention. [music] [music] [music] Have you ever wondered why some people Have you ever wondered why some people with kidney disease swell up [music] with kidney disease swell up [music] dramatically while others at the same dramatically while others at the same stage barely notice anything? Or why stage barely notice anything? Or why your diuretic works for a few hours, but your diuretic works for a few hours, but by evening your legs are right back by evening your legs are right back where they started? Maybe you have where they started? Maybe you have been told to just cut salt and limit fluids, told to just cut salt and limit fluids, and you have done that faithfully, and you have done that faithfully, [music] and it's still not enough. If [music] and it's still not enough. If that's you, I want you to know that's you, I want you to know something. You are not doing it wrong.

something. You are not doing it wrong. The approach is just incomplete. Here's The approach is just incomplete. Here's what most people are never told about what most people are never told about fluid retention. Your kidneys do far fluid retention. Your kidneys do far more than make [music] urine. They're more than make [music] urine. They're running a constant, incredibly precise running a constant, incredibly precise balancing act, managing

sodium, balancing act, managing sodium, potassium, fluid volume, blood pressure, potassium, fluid volume, blood pressure, and hormones and hormones >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> all at once. When kidney function >> all at once. When kidney function declines, that balance starts to declines, that balance starts to unravel, and fluid build-up is one of unravel, and fluid build-up is one of the most visible signs. But, the the most visible signs. But, the mechanism behind it is more layered than mechanism behind it is more layered than it appears on the surface, and this is it appears on the surface, and this is where it gets interesting.

where it gets interesting.

How Kidneys Regulate Fluid Balance

>> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> There are at least three different >> There are at least three different things happening simultaneously when things happening simultaneously when fluid starts accumulating. First, fluid starts accumulating. First, damaged kidneys lose the ability to damaged kidneys lose the ability to excrete sodium efficiently, and there's excrete sodium efficiently, and there's a rule in physiology that never breaks.

a rule in physiology that never breaks. Where sodium goes, water flows. So, Where sodium goes, water flows. So, sodium builds up, and water comes right sodium builds up, and water comes right along with it. Second, the kidneys along with it. Second, the kidneys produce hormones, renin, aldosterone, produce hormones, renin, aldosterone, [music] that regulate blood pressure and [music] that regulate blood pressure and fluid balance. When these systems become fluid balance. When these systems become deregulated, your body gets stuck in a deregulated, your body gets stuck in a mode of holding onto fluid it should be mode of holding onto fluid it should be releasing. And [music] third, and this releasing.

Multiple Causes of Swelling

And [music] third, and this one surprises a lot of people, many one surprises a lot of people, many people with kidney disease are losing people with kidney disease are losing protein through their urine.

protein through their urine. Those proteins, specially one called Those proteins, specially one called albumin, act like tiny sponges [music] albumin, act like tiny sponges [music] inside your blood vessels, keeping fluid inside your blood vessels, keeping fluid where it belongs.

where it belongs. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> When albumin drops, fluid leaks out of >> When albumin drops, fluid leaks out of your vessels and into your tissues.

your vessels and into your tissues. [music] [music] [music] That's the puffiness. That's the That's the puffiness. That's the swelling. But, here's where I started swelling. But, here's where I started asking different [music] questions, asking different [music] questions, because if it were purely about kidney because if it were purely about kidney function, then two people at the same function, then two people at the same eGFR should have the same degree of eGFR should have the same degree of swelling.

swelling. swelling. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> And they don't. Not even close. So, what >> And they don't. Not even close. So, what else is going on? What the research is else is going on? What the research is revealing, and what I have [music] seen revealing, and what I have [music] seen play out clinically over and over is play out clinically over and over is that fluid retention is a that fluid retention is a multi-factorial problem. Inflammation multi-factorial problem. Inflammation makes blood vessels leaky, heart makes blood vessels leaky, heart function determines how efficiently function determines how efficiently fluid circulates, your lymphatic [music] fluid circulates, your lymphatic [music] system, this whole drainage network most system, this whole drainage network most people never think about, [music] people never think about, [music] determines whether fluid gets recycled determines whether fluid gets recycled or just sits in your tissues. Even your or just sits in your tissues. Even your gut health plays a role because gut gut health plays a role because gut dysbiosis drives the kind [music] of dysbiosis drives the kind [music] of systemic inflammation that makes every systemic inflammation that makes every one of these problems worse.

one of these problems worse.

A Patient Case and the Value of a Whole-System View

When you start looking at it this way, When you start looking at it this way, taking a diuretic and cut out your salt taking a diuretic and cut out your salt starts [music] to feel like putting a starts [music] to feel like putting a bucket under a leaking roof without ever bucket under a leaking roof without ever looking at why the roof is leaking.

looking at why the roof is leaking. And this reminds me of someone I worked And this reminds me of someone I worked with at our institute, [music] a woman with at our institute, [music] a woman in her, I think, early 60s with stage in her, I think, early 60s with stage four kidney disease and persistent four kidney disease and persistent [music] swelling in her legs and ankles.

[music] swelling in her legs and ankles. She was already doing everything right She was already doing everything right by conventional standards. She [music] by conventional standards. She [music] was on a diuretic, following a low was on a diuretic, following a low sodium diet, checking in with her kidney sodium diet, checking in with her kidney doctor regularly, doctor regularly, >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> but the swelling barely budged. When we >> but the swelling barely budged. When we did a comprehensive assessment, and I did a comprehensive assessment, and I mean detailed, looking at her whole mean detailed, looking at her whole system, we [music] found severe system, we [music] found severe inflammation, low albumin from a inflammation, low albumin from a combination of kidney protein loss and combination of kidney protein loss and poor gut absorption, [music] poor gut absorption, [music] significant lymphatic congestion, and significant lymphatic congestion, and mildly compromised heart [music] mildly compromised heart [music] function that was contributing to the function that was contributing to the backup.

backup. backup. None of these things [music] had been None of these things [music] had been investigated before investigated before because the focus had been entirely on because the focus had been entirely on the kidneys. [music] We built a the kidneys.

Practical Steps for Sodium and Fluid Management

[music] We built a personalized system for her addressing personalized system for her addressing every one of those layers, and within every one of those layers, and within about three months [music] the swelling about three months [music] the swelling had improved dramatically.

had improved dramatically. Her kidney function actually [music] Her kidney function actually [music] ticked up slightly, too, which was ticked up slightly, too, which was unexpected. Now, every person responds unexpected. Now, every person responds differently. And what worked for her may differently. And what worked for her may not be the exact right approach [music] not be the exact right approach [music] for someone else. But her case showed me for someone else. But her case showed me something I keep coming back [music] to.

something I keep coming back [music] to. When you expand the lens, you find When you expand the lens, you find solutions you'd never see through the solutions you'd never see through the narrow view. So, let's get practical.

narrow view. So, let's get practical. Because I don't want you to just Because I don't want you to just understand this, I want you to walk away understand this, I want you to walk away with things you can actually do. Let's with things you can actually do. Let's start with sodium, [music] start with sodium, [music] because this is the foundation, but not because this is the foundation, but not for the reason you think.

for the reason you think. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> You've heard cut your salt. And yes, >> You've heard cut your salt. And yes, most people with kidney disease should most people with kidney disease should aim for under 2,000 mg of sodium [music] aim for under 2,000 mg of sodium [music] per day. But here's the number that per day. But here's the number that shocks people. 75% of the sodium in the shocks people. 75% of the sodium in the average American diet doesn't come from average American diet doesn't come from the salt shaker, it comes from processed the salt shaker, it comes from processed [music] foods, [music] foods, restaurant meals, packaged

snacks, restaurant meals, packaged snacks, bread, condiments, canned foods. Even bread, condiments, canned foods. Even some medications contain sodium.

some medications contain sodium. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> So, putting down the salt shaker, while >> So, putting down the salt shaker, while it matters, barely scratches the it matters, barely scratches the surface. The real shift happens when you surface. The real shift happens when you move towards whole unprocessed [music] move towards whole unprocessed [music] foods, fresh vegetables, fruits, whole foods, fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, lean proteins prepared grains, legumes, lean proteins prepared at home.

at home. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> That's where you take back control. Read >> That's where you take back control. Read labels. Anything over 200 mg of sodium labels. Anything over 200 mg of sodium per serving needs a second [music] look.

per serving needs a second [music] look. Now, here's something that trips up Now, here's something that trips up people. What about potassium? [music] people. What about potassium? [music] In a healthy body, potassium helps In a healthy body, potassium helps balance sodium's effects. But in kidney balance sodium's effects. But in kidney disease, the kidneys can't always disease, the kidneys can't always excrete [music] potassium efficiently, excrete [music] potassium efficiently, so it can build up to dangerous levels.

so it can build up to dangerous levels. Some people need to restrict it, [music] Some people need to restrict it, [music] others can actually benefit from a others can actually benefit from a potassium-rich food.

potassium-rich food. This is exactly why personalization This is exactly why personalization matters so much. What your body needs matters so much. What your body needs depends on your labs, your stage of depends on your labs, your stage of disease, your individual root causes.

disease, your individual root causes. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> There's no one size fits all here. And >> There's no one size fits all here. And fluid intake, this one is fluid intake, this one is counterintuitive. You think drinking counterintuitive. You think drinking less would [music] reduce swelling, less would [music] reduce swelling, right? But restricting fluids too right? But restricting fluids too aggressively can concentrate your blood, aggressively can concentrate your blood, [music] strain your remaining kidney [music] strain your remaining kidney function, and paradoxically function, and paradoxically trigger trigger trigger to hold on to even more sodium and to hold on to even more sodium and water.

water. water.

Lymphatic Support, Movement, and Elevation

>> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> The general principle is to match your >> The general principle is to match your fluid intake to your output plus about fluid intake to your output plus about 500 ml [music] for what you lose through 500 ml [music] for what you lose through breathing and skin. But some people with breathing and skin. But some people with early kidney disease don't need any early kidney disease don't need any [music] fluid restriction, while those [music] fluid restriction, while those with advanced disease may need careful with advanced disease may need careful limits. This has to be individualized.

limits. This has to be individualized. Here's a practical tool that costs Here's a practical tool that costs nothing and takes 30 seconds. nothing and takes 30 seconds. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> Weigh yourself every morning at the same >> Weigh yourself every morning at the same time after using the bathroom, wearing time after using the bathroom, wearing similar clothing. Write it down. A similar clothing. Write it down. A sudden gain of 2 to 3 lb in a single day sudden gain of 2 to 3 lb in a single day [music] [music] [music] or 5 lb in a week almost always means or 5 lb in a week almost always means fluid retention. And that's your signal fluid retention. And that's your signal to reach out to your doctor.

to reach out to your doctor. This gives you real-time data about This gives you real-time data about what's happening inside your body before what's happening inside your body before it becomes a crisis. Now stay with me

it becomes a crisis. Now stay with me because this is where the pieces start because this is where the pieces start coming together in a way [music] most coming together in a way [music] most people never hear about. Your lymphatic people never hear about. Your lymphatic system, think of it as your body's system, think of it as your body's drainage network, plays a huge role in drainage network, plays a huge role in fluid balance that gets almost zero fluid balance that gets almost zero attention in conventional kidney care.

attention in conventional kidney care. When your lymphatic system [music] is When your lymphatic system [music] is sluggish, sluggish, sluggish, fluid pools in your tissues even if your fluid pools in your tissues even if your kidneys are doing a reasonable job. And kidneys are doing a reasonable job. And one of the simplest, most effective ways one of the simplest, most effective ways to get lymphatic fluid moving is gentle to get lymphatic fluid moving is gentle movement. Not intense exercise. In movement. Not intense exercise. In advanced kidney disease, [music] advanced kidney disease, [music] overexertion can actually backfire.

overexertion can actually backfire. I'm talking about walking 15 to 20 I'm talking about walking 15 to 20 minutes few times a day. minutes few times a day. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> Gentle stretching, ankle pumps, simple >> Gentle stretching, ankle pumps, simple yoga movements, and elevation.

yoga movements, and elevation. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> This is more powerful than most people >> This is more powerful than most people realize. When you elevate your legs realize. When you elevate your legs above heart level for 20 to 30 minutes above heart level for 20 to 30 minutes several times a day, you are using several times a day, you are using gravity to pull fluid out of your lower gravity to pull fluid out of your lower extremities and back into circulation extremities and back into circulation where your kidneys can actually process where your kidneys can actually process it.

it. it. Some people find sleeping with their Some people find sleeping with their legs slightly elevated on pillows help, legs slightly elevated on pillows help, too.

too. too.

Herbs, Supplements, and Omega-3s

Though you want to make sure this Though you want to make sure this doesn't interfere with breathing if you doesn't interfere with breathing if you have any heart or lung concerns.

have any heart or lung concerns. Compression stockings, properly fitted Compression stockings, properly fitted graduated compression can prevent fluid graduated compression can prevent fluid from pooling throughout the day. But from pooling throughout the day. But these need to be appropriate for your these need to be appropriate for your specific situation, [music] specific situation, [music] especially if you have any vascular especially if you have any vascular issues.

issues. issues. I want to address something I get asked I want to address something I get asked about constantly. about constantly. Herbal diuretics and kidney cleanse Herbal diuretics and kidney cleanse teas.

teas. teas. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> And I'll be direct. This is where I get >> And I'll be direct. This is where I get cautious. Just because something is cautious. Just because something is natural doesn't mean it's safe [music] natural doesn't mean it's safe [music] for compromised kidneys. Many herbs for compromised kidneys. Many herbs marketed as kidney cleansers can marketed as kidney cleansers can actually be harmful or interact with actually be harmful or interact with medications in dangerous ways. That medications in dangerous ways. That said, certain foods have mild gentle said, certain foods have mild gentle diuretic properties without [music] diuretic properties without [music] stressing the kidneys.

stressing the kidneys. Celery, cucumber, watermelon, parsley in Celery, cucumber, watermelon, parsley in moderate amounts, these work by moderate amounts, these work by supporting the body's own fluid balance supporting the body's own fluid balance rather than forcing fluid out. Dandelion rather than forcing fluid out. Dandelion leaf tea is another option some people leaf tea is another option some people explore, but it's high in

potassium, explore, but it's high in potassium, [music] so you absolutely must check [music] so you absolutely must check with your doctor first.

with your doctor first. And this brings up something I feel And this brings up something I feel strongly about. strongly about. With kidney disease, the quality of any With kidney disease, the quality of any supplement you take matters [music] supplement you take matters [music] enormously. Many supplements contain enormously. Many supplements contain unnecessary fillers, heavy [snorts] unnecessary fillers, heavy [snorts] metals, or ingredients that can actively metals, or ingredients that can actively harm your kidneys. We only recommend harm your kidneys. We only recommend pharmaceutical grade supplements [music] pharmaceutical grade supplements [music] that has been third-party tested for the that has been third-party tested for the purity. One worth mentioning purity. One worth mentioning specifically is omega-3 fatty acids.

specifically is omega-3 fatty acids. Multiple studies show omega-3s help Multiple studies show omega-3s help reduce inflammation, support heart reduce inflammation, support heart health, and may even slow kidney disease health, and may even slow kidney disease progression. They don't directly drain progression.

Root Causes: Albumin, Protein, and Inflammation

They don't directly drain fluid, but by addressing the fluid, but by addressing the inflammatory component that makes blood inflammatory component that makes blood vessels [music] vessels [music] leaky and triggers sodium retention, leaky and triggers sodium retention, they can be part of a comprehensive they can be part of a comprehensive approach. Quality and dosing are approach. Quality and dosing are critical here. This [music] isn't a more critical here. This [music] isn't a more is better situation, and that brings us is better situation, and that brings us to the deeper root causes.

to the deeper root causes. >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> If low albumin is contributing to your >> If low albumin is contributing to your leg swelling, we need to ask why [music] leg swelling, we need to ask why [music] it's low. Is your kidney losing too much it's low. Is your kidney losing too much protein in the urine? That's one protein in the urine? That's one pathway, but [music] are you also not pathway, but [music] are you also not absorbing protein well because of your absorbing protein well because of your gut issues?

gut issues? >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> Are you restricting protein too >> Are you restricting protein too aggressively based on outdated dietary aggressively based on outdated dietary advice?

advice? advice? The relationship between protein intake The relationship between protein intake and kidney disease has evolved and kidney disease has evolved significantly. Research now shows that significantly. Research now shows that the type and [music] quality of protein the type and [music] quality of protein matters more than the blanket quantity.

matters more than the blanket quantity. Plant-based proteins tend to be less Plant-based proteins tend to be less stressful on the kidneys, while still stressful on the kidneys, while still providing what your body needs. A providing what your body needs. A functional approach looks at your functional approach looks at your individual protein requirements based on individual protein requirements based on muscle [music] mass, muscle [music] mass, activity level, inflammatory status, and activity level, inflammatory status, and kidney [music] function, not a kidney [music] function, not a one-size-fits-all restriction.

one-size-fits-all restriction. Inflammation itself is a root cause that Inflammation itself is a root cause that deserves its own investigation. deserves its own investigation.

Chronic inflammation makes blood vessels Chronic inflammation makes blood vessels permeable, and that triggers hormonal permeable, and that triggers hormonal cascades that retain sodium and water cascades that retain sodium and water and directly damages [music] kidney and directly damages [music] kidney tissue over time.

tissue over time. Anti-inflammatory nutrition, colorful Anti-inflammatory nutrition, colorful vegetables and fruits, avoiding vegetables and fruits, avoiding processed foods and refined sugars, processed foods and refined sugars,

incorporating turmeric and ginger, incorporating turmeric and ginger, identifying personal food sensitivities, identifying personal food sensitivities, this isn't a nice-to-have. For many this isn't a nice-to-have. For many people, it's a missing piece that people, it's a missing piece that explains why conventional management explains why conventional management alone [music] alone [music] isn't working.

isn't working. The gut-kidney connection plays into The gut-kidney connection plays into this, too. this, too.

Gut Health, Stress, and Sleep

>> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> An imbalanced gut microbiome contributes >> An imbalanced gut microbiome contributes to systemic inflammation and produces to systemic inflammation and produces uremic toxins that further burdens the uremic toxins that further burdens the kidneys. Supporting gut health through kidneys. Supporting gut health through diverse plant [music] foods, and when diverse plant [music] foods, and when appropriate, targeted probiotics appropriate, targeted probiotics >> [music] >> [music] >> [music] >> can indirectly improve fluid balance by >> can indirectly improve fluid balance by calming the inflammatory cascade that calming the inflammatory cascade that [music] drives it.

[music] drives it. And something that might surprise you, And something that might surprise you, stress and sleep. Chronic stress [music] stress and sleep. Chronic stress [music] floods your body with cortisol and other floods your body with cortisol and other hormones that directly affect sodium hormones that directly affect sodium retention and blood pressure. Poor sleep retention and blood pressure. Poor sleep disrupts the regulatory systems that disrupts the regulatory systems that control fluid balance. So, when I control fluid balance. So, when I suggest deep breathing, meditation, suggest deep breathing, meditation, gentle yoga, or simply spending time in gentle yoga, or simply spending time in nature, I'm not just [music] offering nature, I'm not just [music] offering feel-good advice. These practices have feel-good advice. These practices have measurable physiological effects on the measurable physiological effects on the very systems that determines whether very systems that determines whether your body holds fluid or releases it.

your body holds fluid or releases it. Now, I need to be clear about something Now, I need to be clear about something important. important. important.

If you are experiencing severe or sudden If you are experiencing severe or sudden swelling, swelling, swelling, shortness of breath, chest pain, or shortness of breath, chest pain, or significant changes in urination, significant changes in urination, these are not wait-and-see situations.

these are not wait-and-see situations.

When Swelling Needs Urgent Medical Attention

[music] [music] [music] Fluid in the lungs is a medical Fluid in the lungs is a medical emergency. Natural and supportive emergency. Natural and supportive approaches work best when kidney disease approaches work best when kidney disease is caught early or is in stable earlier is caught early or is in stable earlier stages.

stages. stages. They work alongside your medical care, They work alongside your medical care, not in place of it. Here's what I keep not in place of it. Here's what I keep coming back to.

coming back to. Fluid retention in kidney disease is not Fluid retention in kidney disease is not one problem with one solution. It's a one problem with one solution. It's a complex signal from a whole system that complex signal from a whole system that needs attention. Your kidneys, yes, but needs attention. Your kidneys, yes, but also your inflammation, also your inflammation, your gut, your heart, your lymphatic your gut, your heart, your lymphatic system, your hormones, your stress system, your hormones, your stress response. When you address the whole response. When you address the whole picture, [music] you often see picture, [music] you often see improvements that surprise everyone, improvements that surprise everyone, including the doctors. So, here's what including the doctors. So, here's what you can start doing right now. Track you can start doing right now. Track your daily weight and symptoms. That your daily weight and symptoms. That data is invaluable. Take an honest look data is

invaluable. Take an honest look at your sodium intake, especially from at your sodium intake, especially from packaged and processed foods.

packaged and processed foods. Incorporate gentle movement and leg Incorporate gentle movement and leg elevation into your daily routine. And elevation into your daily routine.

A Whole-Body Plan for Kidney Health

And most importantly, find a physician who most importantly, find a physician who is willing to look at your whole system, is willing to look at your whole system, not just your creatinine number. If not just your creatinine number. If you're dealing with kidney concerns and you're dealing with kidney concerns and want a personalized approach that want a personalized approach that investigates your unique root causes, investigates your unique root causes, which could be inflammation, gut health, which could be inflammation, gut health, hormone imbalance, all of it, [music] we hormone imbalance, all of it, [music] we offer consultations at The Kidney offer consultations at The Kidney Institute. Visit our website to learn Institute. Visit our website to learn more, because your body is trying to more, because your body is trying to tell you something, and it deserves more tell you something, and it deserves more