



# Fighting Water Retention

by Chris Weintrob

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Feeling swollen, bloated and downright puffy? Socket too tight? You're not alone. The good news is there are simple remedies to fight the bloat and even prevent it in the first place.

## What Is Water Retention?

Water retention, also known as edema, is swelling caused by an abnormal build-up of fluid in your body's tissues. People most often see swelling in their feet, ankles and legs, but it can also be seen in the hands, face and abdomen.

## Causes of Water Retention

Mild cases of edema can result from:

- Sitting in one position for too long
- Too much salty food
- Not drinking enough water
- Lack of potassium or magnesium
- Poor nutrition in general
- PMS
- Pregnancy
- Certain drugs, including some

blood pressure medications, anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), estrogen, steroids, some antidepressants, and certain type 2 diabetes medications (thiazolidinediones).

More serious causes of edema include:

- Congestive heart failure
- Liver disease
- Kidney disease

- Weak or damaged leg veins
- Inadequate lymphatic system.

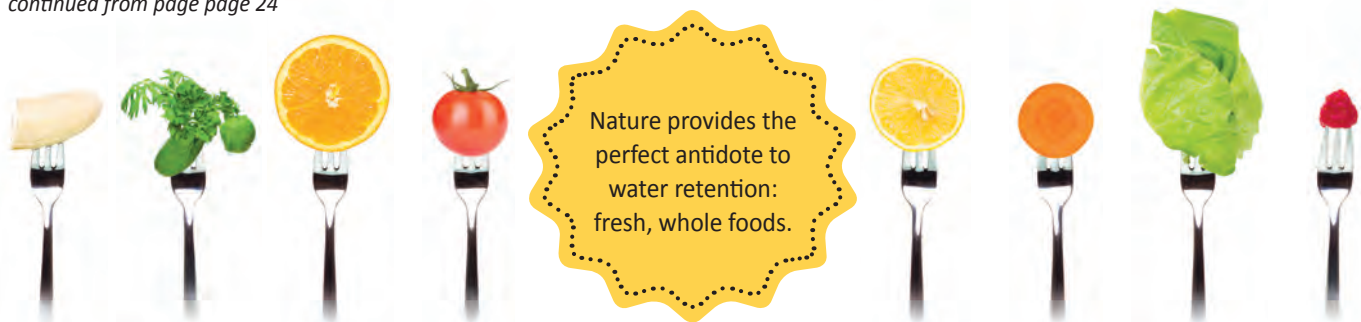
Kidney, liver or heart disease can be manifested to some extent by water retention. Since edema can be symptomatic of a serious illness, it's important to determine the underlying cause. If you suspect that you have a more serious underlying medical condition, don't hesitate to consult your physician.

## How to Fight Water Retention

If the cause of your water retention is relatively benign, you can take simple steps to reduce the swelling. In a nutshell, you should decrease your consumption of bad foods and increase your intake of good foods.

Drink plenty of water. This may seem counterintuitive; after all, you're trying to get rid of excess water!





## Foods to avoid

When you consume salty foods, you upset the sodium balance in your bloodstream. Your body then tries to dilute the salt by retaining water – thus the bloating. But refraining from salt is only one (and probably the least effective) way to avoid over-consumption of salt. More importantly, you should limit your intake of processed, packaged foods, which are usually loaded with sodium.

## Foods to add to your diet

Nature provides the perfect antidote to water retention: fresh, whole foods. Not only do they reduce your risk of bloating, they are a boon to your health. Along with sodium and other electrolytes, potassium and magnesium are required to maintain the body's fluid balance. If you consume too much sodium, foods rich in potassium and magnesium can help restore the balance. Magnesium is

also important for calcium metabolism and maintaining normal muscle and nerve function.

**WATER.** Drink plenty of water. This may seem counterintuitive; after all, you're trying to get *rid* of excess water! But dehydration actually makes your body retain water. So drink, drink and drink some more to flush out excess sodium and water retention. Throw in a slice of lemon, lime or orange to jazz things up.

**AVOCADOS.** Avocados are rich in potassium and vitamins B-complex, E and K. Avocados get a bad rap for being high in fat and calories, but they are actually nutritional powerhouses. Yes, there are 21g of fat in a medium-sized avocado, but the majority of these fats are monounsaturated (the "heart-healthy" kind that helps reduce bad cholesterol).

**BANANAS, MELONS AND CITRUS FRUITS.** Try a fruit salad or smoothie for breakfast (better yet, toss in some leafy greens for a green smoothie) or grab a banana for an afternoon snack.

**WATERCRESS AND PARSLEY.** These often-overlooked leafy greens are natural diuretics that are also high in potassium and antioxidants, respectively. Other bloat-fighting vegetables include other leafy greens, celery, tomatoes, carrots, onions and peppers.

**ALMONDS.** Almonds are rich in potassium *and* magnesium, as well as an excellent source of good-for-you fats, fiber and protein.

**HERBS.** There is an entire class of herbs known for their diuretic properties, such as dandelion root tea, which is also a rich source of potassium and aids in cleansing the liver and kidneys. Talk to a naturopath or herbalist for more information.

## Shift Your Mindset

Even if the cause of your swelling is congestive heart failure, kidney or liver disease, or some other serious illness, improving your diet can make a tremendous difference. Rather than thinking of food simply as a source of calories, consider food as a source of special ingredients that can prevent and heal disease, and transform your health. As Hippocrates said, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." 🌀

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