



Nutrition and Kidney Transplant

It is important to continue a healthy diet after transplant. Good nutrition is important for you and for the health of your newly transplanted kidney. Healthy food choices can help you:

1. Maintain normal blood sugar, helping to prevent diabetes.
2. Maintain a healthy weight. Weight gain after transplant is common.
3. Maintain normal blood pressure through salt control.
4. Keep blood fats like cholesterol in normal range.
5. Preserve bone health.

CALORIES

Carbohydrates, proteins and fats provide calories. Some of the medications you take after transplant can lead to an increased appetite. Excess calories will lead to weight gain. **Healthy food choices** will help maintain a **healthy weight**. Limit high calorie, fatty foods and sugars.

CARBOHYDRATES AND BLOOD SUGAR

Some of the medications you must take to prevent rejection of your newly transplanted kidney can lead to high blood sugar. Your blood sugar might be high even if you have never been a diabetic. The transplant team might instruct you to check your blood sugar at home. Avoid foods containing added sugars or those high in sugars like juice, soda, desserts and candy. Carbohydrates (carbs) in foods like bread, pasta, rice and potato, also turn into “sugar” in the blood. Choose the healthiest carbs like those found in whole grains like whole wheat bread, whole grain cereals, whole-wheat pasta and brown rice. If needed, the dietitian will help you understand how to read a food label and how to balance your carbs at each meal.



PROTEIN

You need more protein to help with healing after transplant surgery. Healing usually takes between 6-8 weeks. Good sources of protein include fish, poultry, egg whites, egg substitutes, lean meat, and low fat dairy (milk, yogurt and cottage cheese). If your appetite is poor, we may recommend a supplement like Glucerna® or Ensure Plus®. To insure you are eating enough protein, include a protein food at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Milk on cereal at breakfast, tuna salad sandwich at lunch, grilled chicken breast at dinner and a yogurt at bedtime are examples of how to achieve this goal. Once you have healed, you should resume a more moderate protein intake and avoid high protein fad diets because they make your single kidney work too hard.

FATS

Fats provide more than double the calories of protein and carbs. Choose lean proteins like fish and poultry. Purchase lean meats and trim the visible fat. Choose reduced or no fat milk and yogurt. Limit added fats, like butter and sour cream on baked potatoes. Limit fried foods. Broil, roast and grill instead. Store bought cookies, crackers and snack foods are usually high in fat. They often are a source of trans- fats. Trans- fats can increase your cholesterol. Use canola oil, olive oil and cooking sprays.

SODIUM

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend using less than 2300 milligrams of sodium per day. Seventy-five percent of our sodium intake comes from processed convenience and prepared foods. Canned soups, deli meats and cheeses, and many snack foods like chips and crackers are usually high in sodium. Remember that sea salt has the same amount of salt as regular table salt. If you have any questions, ask the dietitian to review this diet with you. Restaurant foods contain lots of sodium. Order grilled, baked, or roasted, chicken, fish or lean meat. Ask that they be prepared without additional salt. Request that sauces be served on the side. Many restaurants have a web site where you can check sodium information before you go. Better yet, limit how often you eat out.

FLUID

Drink plenty of fluid. A reasonable goal is 1½ to 2 quarts per day. Adequate fluid prevents dehydration, which may be harmful to your kidney. Water and other no calorie beverages are the best choice. Too much juice adds sugar calories

POTASSIUM

Certain immunosuppressant medications may cause elevated blood potassium. This is often temporary. Occasionally a low potassium diet is necessary. If needed, the dietitian will provide you with a list of foods to help guide your choices. High potassium foods include oranges, orange juice, banana, cantaloupe, honeydew, baked potato, yams, spinach, tomato sauce, spaghetti sauce and tomato juice. It is not mandatory to list potassium on the nutrition label. The absence of potassium on the label does not mean there is no potassium in the food.

PHOSPHORUS

You may need extra phosphorus after your transplant. Good sources of phosphorus include the protein foods, low fat milk and yogurt, nuts, legumes (dried peas and beans), and whole grain products. If needed, the dietitian will assist you in understanding how to increase the phosphorus in your diet.

CALCIUM

Long- term steroid use (prednisone) may contribute to bone loss. It is important that you get 1000-1500 milligrams of calcium per day. Good sources of calcium include low fat milk and yogurt. The doctor may recommend a calcium supplement. Weight bearing exercises can help protect your bone health.

A healthy diet and healthy life style will help provide the best environment for your kidney. Healthy lifestyles include physical activity. Try to be physically active every day. Walking is a great activity. You can do it anywhere. Just wear comfortable shoes and clothes. Always check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

See www.choosemyplate.gov for more details on choosing a healthy diet.