

Patient information

Healthy Eating after a Transplant

Renal Dieticians - Therapy Department

Name:

Date:

Dietitian

Introduction

Now that you have had a successful kidney transplant, you can enjoy a much wider choice of food and drinks. This is because your new kidney is now getting rid of the waste products from your body e.g. fluid, potassium and phosphate.

After a transplant it is important to follow a healthy eating diet as you may experience unwanted side effects e.g. weight gain, high blood sugars and raised cholesterol levels due to the following:

- You may have an increase in appetite.
- You will have more freedom with your diet, as there is no need for previous renal restrictions.
- Side effects of immuno-suppression tablets.

A healthy eating diet is a diet that should be high in fibre and low in fat and sugar. It is a diet that the whole population should follow.

Reduce your fat intake

- Choose lower fat dairy products e.g. semi-skimmed milk, low fat cheese and diet yoghurts.
- Choose lean cuts of meat, poultry and fish. Always remove skin and fat before cooking.
- Choose lower fat spreads e.g. flora light, Gold or Vitalite.
- Use cooking oil sparingly - choose olive oil, sunflower or rapeseed oil.
- Grill, steam, microwave or oven bake food instead of frying.

Reduce your intake of sugary foods

Sugary foods are high in calories and often provide only small quantities of other nutrients:

- Try sugar free drinks e.g. diet pop, no added sugar cordial.
- Try sweeteners e.g. sweetex, candarel or hermasetas.
- Use non-sugar coated cereals e.g. rice krispies, corn flakes or shredded wheat.
- Use jam, marmalade and honey sparingly or choose sugar free varieties.

Eat more fibre

Fibre is important to help keep your bowels healthy. Fibre is found in wholegrain bread e.g. granary or wholemeal, and cereals e.g. weetabix, shredded wheat, branflakes and muesli.

Some medications you may be prescribed can cause diarrhoea e.g. MMF (Cellcept). Foods containing soluble fibre could help prevent this. This type of fibre can also have a beneficial effect on cholesterol levels. Oats, beans and pulses, fruit and vegetables all contain soluble fibre.

Fruit and vegetables

If your potassium is within target range you should aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables a day which should come from a variety of different sources.

One portion of fruit =

- One large fruit e.g. apple, banana, pear or orange.
- Two small fruits e.g. satsuma, plum or kiwi.
- One bowl of fruit e.g. strawberries, mixed fruit salad.
- A handful of grapes.

One portion of vegetables =

- Three heaped tablespoons of cooked vegetables, such as carrots, peas or sweetcorn.
- Eight cauliflower florets.
- Two broccoli spears.
- Four heaped tablespoons of cooked kale, spinach, spring greens or green beans.

Salt

It is still important to avoid too much salt, to help keep your blood pressure under control.

- A little salt may be used in cooking but avoid extra salt at the table.

- Instead of adding salt to your food, you could try other flavourings like pepper, garlic, lemon, ginger, herbs or spices.
- Cut down on salty foods e.g. processed meats and fish, where possible choose fresh cuts.
- Watch salty snacks, such as crisps, salted nuts and salted crackers.
- Use sauces sparingly e.g. soy sauce, tomato sauce and brown sauce.
- Do not use salt substitutes e.g. lo salt, solo or saxa.

Exercise

Activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. It can help to maintain a healthy body weight and a healthy heart. Weight bearing exercise such as brisk walking, skipping or keep fit classes help improve bone density and help prevent osteoporosis.

Before starting any exercise speak to your clinic nurse or doctor. Adults should do at least 150 minutes (two hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity exercise every week. This includes any activity that increases your heart and breathing rate – it may make you sweat, but you are still able to hold a normal conversation.

Alcohol

Check with your doctor whether alcohol is allowed. Drink within sensible limits (no more than fourteen units per week for men and women, which should be spread evenly throughout the week, including alcohol free days). Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks to reduce your overall intake

One unit = One spirit measure (25ml).

½ pint of lager, beer or cider.

One small glass of wine (125ml).

Do previous dietary restrictions need to continue after transplant?

Once your transplanted kidney starts to work then you should be able to begin to relax your previous renal dietary restrictions.

Phosphate

After your transplant, your phosphate level may drop too low due to your new kidney 'over working.' It is important to keep your phosphate level within the normal range. If it is too low you should aim to eat more phosphate rich foods:

- Oily fish (salmon, sardines, mackerel, one portion per week).
- Dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurts) choose low fat/ low sugar varieties.
- Include protein foods with each meal e.g. meat, fish, milk or eggs.

You may need medications e.g. Phosphate Sandoz to help increase your levels.

Potassium

As your kidney function improves you should be able to relax your low potassium diet. Some of the new medication can cause high potassium levels so this may have to be done gradually. If your potassium levels remain high after the transplant you will need to follow a low potassium diet, speak to your dietitian about this.

Fluid

It is important to drink enough to prevent dehydration e.g. tea, water and squash. Your transplant team will advise you on how much you should drink. If you were on a fluid restriction before your transplant, drinking more than you used to can be difficult, these tips can help you:

- Use larger cups and glasses.
- Track your fluid intake on a smartphone fitness app.
- Spread your fluid intake over the day.
- Small amounts of salty foods can help to make you thirsty but this should only be done initially to help you to get used to the new amount of fluid. (For the long term it is important to follow the salt advice already mentioned in this diet sheet.)

Delayed graft function

If your kidney function is slow to improve you may need to continue with your previous fluid and diet restrictions until your new kidney has woken up.

Other considerations

Renal transplant bone disease

The risk of bone fractures is increased among people who have had a kidney transplant. This can be due to pre-existing bone disease or transplant specific medications, especially prednisolone and Tacrolimus which can cause osteoporosis (weak bones). Therefore it is important to ensure a good intake of calcium and vitamin D in the diet after your transplant.

High sources of calcium

- Milk – all types. If choosing non-dairy milk such as soya or rice milk, check the label to make sure that it is fortified with calcium.
- Cheese – all types except cottage cheese and cream cheese.
- Yoghurt and yoghurt drinks – plain or fruit.
- Tofu.
- Tinned fish especially sardines, pilchards and salmon (if the bones are eaten).
- Sesame seeds and tahini.
- Instant porridge fortified with calcium

High sources of vitamin D

- Skimmed milk powder (with added vitamin D),
- Margarine and low-fat spread
- Oily fish such as mackerel
- Fortified breakfast cereals
- Eggs

Magnesium

After your transplant, your magnesium levels may drop too low. This can be a possible side effect of your immuno-suppression medication. It is important to keep the level within the normal range. If it is too low you may need to eat more magnesium rich foods:

- Green vegetables.
- Meats.
- Fish.
- Dairy foods (milk, eggs, cheese, yoghurts).

Foods that interact with medications

Some foods, plant compounds and herbal remedies can interact with anti-rejection medication and affect how well they work. It is not recommended to take any alternative medicines (e.g. herbal or homeopathic) or high dose vitamins (vitamin C) without discussing with the transplant team. Always discuss with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any non-prescription medicines.

Grapefruit

If you are taking any of the following, you should avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice:

- Ciclosporin (Neoral).
- Tacrolimus (Prograf, Adoport).
- Sirolimus (Rapamune).

Grapefruit can affect the levels of these drugs in your blood. If unsure ask your doctor or pharmacist.

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Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

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