Nutrition After a Kidney Transplant

After your kidney transplant, you may be able to eat foods that were limited before the transplant. It is important to follow a well-balanced diet to keep your new kidney healthy. Eating a healthy diet and increasing your activity can lower your risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and osteoporosis.

For questions about your diet, call the Transplant Center Dietitian at (916) 734 – 6528.

After discharge

Here are some tips for staying healthy:

Fluid goals: If your new kidney is working, drink plenty of fluid. You are no longer on a fluid restriction. Dehydration can be harmful to the new kidney.

Protein: In the first 2 months after transplant, you need more protein to heal after surgery, fight infection, and provide energy.

Protein-rich foods include:
- Lean meats, poultry, fish
- Low-fat or nonfat milk, yogurt, cheese
- Eggs, egg substitutes (such as Egg Beaters®)
- Dried beans, peas, nuts
- Tofu, other soy foods

Potassium: Your transplant medications can cause a high potassium level in your blood. Your Doctor or Dietitian may tell you to avoid foods high in potassium.

High-potassium foods include:
- Some fruits, including melons, bananas, avocados, oranges
- Some vegetables, including potatoes, tomatoes, dark leafy greens
- Chocolate
- Dried beans, lentils
- Salt substitutes (instead, try Mrs. Dash® or dried herbs)

Sodium: Limit sodium to help control fluid retention and blood pressure. Avoid adding salt to foods.

Foods that you may also limit include:
- Salt seasonings (such as garlic salt, soy sauce, teriyaki sauce)
- Cured meats (such as ham, bacon, sausage)
- Lunch meats (such as salami, bologna)
- Frozen meals that have more than 600 mg sodium per serving
- Pickles and olives
- Canned foods with added salt (such as canned vegetables and soups)
- Fast food and many restaurant foods
Food Safety
Transplant drugs can lower your immune system and increase your risk for food-borne illness. You can reduce your risk by handling food safely:

- Avoid raw and undercooked meats, seafood, and eggs, and unpasteurized dairy products.
- Always wash fresh fruits and vegetables well before eating.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.

Food and Drug Interactions
To keep your new kidney healthy, take medications as directed by your Doctor and follow these guidelines:

**CellCept®:**
- Take CellCept® on an empty stomach. Take separately from antacids.
- CellCept® may cause diarrhea, constipation, nausea, and vomiting. Try small frequent meals or snacks to better cope with these side effects.

**Prograf®:**
- Avoid grapefruit products at all times when taking Prograf®.
- Prograf® may cause high blood sugar, nausea, and diarrhea. If you have high blood sugar, limit sweets, regular soda, and juice.

Long Term Goals: A Healthy Life

Weight Management and Cholesterol
Your appetite may improve after transplant. It is important to maintain a healthy weight after transplant to keep your new kidney healthy. Weigh yourself often and avoid high-calorie foods, such as fatty foods and sweets. Follow a heart-healthy diet to control your weight and lower your risk of high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

- Choose lean meats, poultry, and fish. Trim all visible fat off meat before cooking.
- Choose low-fat or nonfat dairy products.
- Avoid shortening, butter, or stick margarine. Choose olive or canola oil and tub margarine, used in small amounts.
- Avoid fried foods. Bake, roast, broil, boil, or sauté foods instead.
- Choose foods high in fiber, such as whole grains, legumes, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Aim for 25-35 grams of fiber per day.

Exercise
After transplant, exercise can:

- Help to control your weight.
- Strengthen your heart.
- Improve your endurance.
- Keep your bones healthy.

Talk with your Doctor before you start any physical activity.