

# Dietary advice after your transplant

**This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you may have about your diet after your transplant. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your renal dietitian. Contact details are given at the end of this leaflet.**

## **Your diet after your transplant**

One of the benefits of a successful renal transplant is that you can enjoy a more varied diet. Many of the dietary restrictions that were needed before your transplant may no longer be necessary.

**Immediately after your operation**, a good nutritional intake will help your recovery. Eating the right foods can help to prevent infections and heal wounds. If your appetite is poor after your operation and you are unable to eat enough, the dietitian may give you nutritional supplements to take.

**In the long-term**, a healthy diet is important. This includes eating foods which are low in fat, sugar, salt and high in fibre. Healthy eating will help you to control your weight and keep your blood levels of cholesterol and other blood fats as near normal as possible. Controlling your weight and cholesterol will help to reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke. Including calcium is also important to keep your bones healthy and reduce the risk of osteoporosis (see page three for more information).

## How do transplant medications affect my diet?

Some of the transplant medications have side effects and you may need to adjust your diet to help manage these.

### Early side effects include:

- **High blood potassium levels** – this can be a problem for a short period following a transplant. If necessary, you will be advised by your dietitian to reduce your intake of high potassium foods.
- **Low phosphate levels** – this may occur for a short period of time after your transplant. If necessary, you will be advised by your dietitian how to increase the phosphate in your diet.
- **Unstable blood sugar levels** – if necessary, you will be given advice to help control your blood sugar levels.

### Long term side effects can include:

- **Weight gain**, especially in the first year. This is probably due to the combination of eating well, a lack of exercise and the effect of some tablets, such as steroids. Being overweight can also lead to the following problems:
  - High blood pressure.
  - Diabetes.
  - Heart disease.
  - Raised cholesterol levels.

## What is involved in healthy eating?

A healthy diet which is low in fat and sugar and high in fibre will help to prevent excessive weight gain and help to keep you fit and healthy. The following table outlines what is involved in healthy eating.

What is involved in healthy eating?	
<b>Enjoy what you eat and eat a varied diet.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eat regular meals to help keep hunger at bay.</li><li>• Avoid snacks in between meals that are high in fat or sugar such as crisps, cakes, biscuits and chocolate.</li><li>• Fresh fruit and raw vegetables are healthy alternatives to snack on between meals.</li><li>• Make time for your meals, eat slowly and enjoy your food.</li></ul>
<b>Eat more fruit and vegetables.</b>  Fruit and vegetables can help protect against heart disease and are a good source of vitamins	<p>Aim to eat at least <b>five</b> portions of fruit and vegetables per day – one portion is about a handful.</p> <p><b>One portion =</b></p> <p>One medium piece e.g. apple; or Two small pieces e.g. two plums; or One cup of chopped fruit or vegetable</p>

## What is involved in healthy eating?

### **Eat more fibre.**

There are two types of fibre:

**1) Insoluble fibre** – helps to ensure regular bowel movements, increase the feeling of fullness and prevent snacking. Wholemeal products (such as brown rice and pasta), wholemeal bread, wholegrain breakfast cereals, beans and pulses are all good sources of insoluble fibre.

**2) Soluble fibre** – helps to control cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Fruits, vegetables, oats, pulses and beans are all good sources of soluble fibre.

### **Cut down on the amount of fat you eat, particularly saturated fats.**

Reducing total fat intake will help you to manage your weight.

Cutting down on saturated fats can reduce your risk of

- Limit saturated fats by:
  - Avoiding butter, lard and ghee.
  - Trimming all visible fat from meat before cooking.
  - Removing skin from chicken.
  - Choosing low-fat dairy products such as semi-skimmed milk, low-fat yoghurts and reduced fat cheeses.
  - Cutting down on the amount of crisps, chocolates, pastries and biscuits that you eat.
- Use small amounts of polyunsaturated

## What is involved in healthy eating?

heart disease.

and monounsaturated fats such as olive, canola, rapeseed, and sunflower oils and spreads.

- Try reduced fat spreads and spread them thinly.
- Avoid frying food. Instead, prepare food by steaming, microwave, grilling, boiling and baking.
- Mayonnaise and salad cream are very high in fat. Choose low-fat varieties and use sparingly.

### **Eat less sugary foods.**

Sugary foods are often high in calories and may contribute to weight gain and unstable blood sugar levels.

- Choose products labelled 'no added sugar', 'low in sugar', 'diet' and 'reduced calorie'.
- Avoid adding extra sugar to drinks and food.
- Use artificial sweetener in place of sugar.
- Limit intake of cakes, biscuits, chocolates and sweets.

## What is involved in healthy eating?

### **Include calcium.**

Steroid medications and a history of kidney disease can weaken bones. A good calcium intake helps to optimise bone health.

- Have two serves of dairy foods every day:

**One serve** = One cup of milk; or  
200g yoghurt; or  
30g (1oz) of cheese

- Use low fat dairy products e.g. semi skim milk, reduced fat cheese, low fat yoghurt.
- Suitable non-dairy alternatives include calcium fortified soya milk, calcium fortified rice milk and calcium fortified soya yoghurt.
- Tinned salmon and sardines are also rich in calcium.

### **Eat less salt.**

Too much salt may cause high blood pressure increasing your risk of heart disease.

- Eat more fresh and unprocessed foods.
- Do not add salt in cooking.
- Avoid adding salt to your food at the table.
- Use herbs, spices and pepper instead of salt.
- Eat fewer takeaway and ready-made meals.

## What is involved in healthy eating?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit salty snacks like crisps or nuts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limit alcohol intake to recommended weekly limits.</b></p> <p>Alcohol is high in calories and may contribute to weight gain.</p>	<p>A maximum of:            21 units per week for men</p> <p style="text-align: right;">14 units per week for women</p> <p>One unit is equal to half a pint beer/lager, one measure of spirit or one small glass wine.</p> <p>You should try to have some alcohol-free days each week.</p> <p>Remember that stronger beers and lagers will contain more units in a smaller volume.</p>

## Exercise

Regular exercise or physical activity is good for you because it helps to:

- Keep your heart healthy.
- Strengthen your bones, muscles and joints.
- Control your weight.
- Control your blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- Reduce your blood pressure.
- Make you feel more positive.

Try to make exercise a part of your everyday routine. For example:

- Using the stairs instead of taking the lift.
- Getting off the bus a stop earlier.
- Taking the dog for a walk.

## **How much exercise should I do?**

You should start lightly and build up gradually. You do not need to join a gym to feel the benefit of increased activity. Choose an activity that you enjoy to help maintain an exercise routine. You should aim for 30 minutes of exercise throughout each day. For example:

- Three sessions of 10 minutes per session;
- Two sessions of 15 minutes; or
- One session of 30 minutes.

Strenuous exercise is not recommended in the first three months after your transplant. Please ask your health care team before you start any formal, strenuous exercise.

## **Food safety**

Anti-rejection drugs lower your resistance to infections and make you more likely to get an infection. Some foods may contain harmful bacteria and you should avoid the following foods while you are on high doses of anti-rejection drugs (usually for up to six months after your transplant):

- Unpasteurised dairy products such as parmesan cheese.
- Live, bio and pre/probiotic yoghurts and drinks as they contain bacteria e.g. Yakult, Actimel, Activia.
- Homemade yoghurt.
- Soft ice cream from vans or ice cream machines.

- Blue-veined and soft mould-ripened cheeses such as Danish Blue, Stilton, Brie, Camembert, Dolcelatte, Roquefort, Feta, Cambozola and goat's cheese.
- Cracked, raw or undercooked eggs e.g. homemade mayonnaise, mousse, hollandaise sauce, eggs with runny yolks, non-pasteurised eggnog or soufflé.
- Ready hot cooked chicken from the supermarket.
- Cold, cooked meats bought loose from the deli counter or butcher's shop. Buy vacuum packed or pre packed cooked meats only.
- Raw or undercooked (rare) meat, poultry, fish e.g. sushi and shellfish e.g. undercooked prawns or mussels. Vacuum packed smoked fish are safe e.g. smoked salmon, mackerel.
- Unwashed fruit and vegetables.
- Pre packed and shop bought salads e.g. coleslaw, pre-made sandwiches with salad.
- Deli-counter foods or food from salad bars.

### **It is also important to follow these general guidelines on food handling safety:**

- Wash your hands before preparing food, after going to the toilet or after handling pets.
- Dry hands on a separate towel not the tea towel.
- Do not eat food that has passed its use by date.
- Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly before eating.
- Store foods as recommended on the packaging.
- Store and prepare raw and cooked foods separately.
- Ensure that your fridge is between 0 to 5°C and your freezer at -18°C or below.
- Do not reheat food more than once and ensure that it is heated until piping hot.

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold so that they are not between 5°C and 63°C where bacteria grow best.
- Never re-freeze thawed food and ensure that all frozen food is defrosted in the fridge.
- Bleach or disinfect kitchen cloths and sponges daily and change regularly.
- Disinfect kitchen worktops frequently, especially after preparing raw meat or poultry.
- Keep pets away from food.
- When eating away from home or buying takeaways choose somewhere with a good reputation for hygiene. The Food Standards Agency runs a scheme called the 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme'. There are 6 possible outcomes where '0' is the lowest, meaning urgent improvement is necessary, to 5 which is 'very good' indicating the best food hygiene practice. You can download an app to check the level of food hygiene quality by following the links from [www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings) (the Food Standards Agency website).

## **Is there anything that can interfere with my immunosuppressive medication?**

All forms of **grapefruit** and **Seville oranges** should be **avoided** as they interfere with your immunosuppressive medication.

It is also recommended that herbal products and vitamins should **never** be used without consultation and discussion with your healthcare team, as they may interact with your immunosuppressive medication or may cause rejection (for example, **St John's Wort** or high-dose vitamin C).

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about dietary advice after your transplant, please do not hesitate to ask your renal dietitian by calling the Nutrition and Dietetics Department on 020 7188 4128 , 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday – please leave a message on our answer phone and we will call you back. Alternatively you can talk to your nurse.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

**t:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'

**t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's

**e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

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