

# Kidney disease: Eating well after a kidney transplant

## Dietetics

Information for Patients

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## Eating well after your transplant

This booklet has information and ideas on following a healthy balanced diet after a kidney transplant.

After a transplant, you will be taking immunosuppression and steroid medications to stop your kidney being rejected. Your doses are highest in the first few months. These medications can affect

- your weight
- blood sugar level
- the fat levels in your blood

We know that the biggest changes can happen in the first 6 months.

Before your transplant you may have been following a low potassium and / or low phosphate diet. After a successful transplant, these diets are usually no longer needed. It is important to have a healthy, well balanced diet.

## Food hygiene and safety

After a transplant you will be prescribed immunosuppression medication to stop the rejection of your kidney. As this medication will suppress your immune system, you may be more at risk of food poisoning. It is important to be careful with food safety and hygiene. Advice about food safety is covered in the booklet 'food hygiene and safety during neutropenia'. Please speak to your dietitian or another member of the transplant team if you need a copy of this.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## **Delayed transplant kidney function**

Sometimes it takes some time for the new kidney to work properly. If this is the case, you should carry on following a low potassium and phosphate diet if you have been told to follow this before. You can ask the ward staff to refer you to the renal dietitians. They will be happy to see you on the ward.

## **High potassium**

Even if your new kidney is working well, your potassium level can sometimes be high due to some of the new medications. If you have been told that your potassium is high then please continue to follow any advice you have been given before. Ask to be referred to the renal dietitians if you need support or have not had information about potassium in food before.

## **Low phosphate**

Often when your transplanted kidney is working well, your blood phosphate level can also run too low. You may be prescribed phosphate tablets to supplement your level. There is a section in this booklet with information on foods high in phosphate. If you would like more information, please ask to be referred to the renal dietitians.

## Healthy eating after a transplant

Once your transplant is working well, it is important to try and eat a healthy balanced diet.

The Eatwell Guide shows how much of what we eat should come from each food group. You do not need to get this balance with every meal, but try to get the balance right over a day or even a week.

- Eat at least 5 portions of many different kinds of fruits and vegetables every day
- Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates. Choose wholegrain versions where possible
- Include some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks). Choose lower fat and lower sugar options .
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (including 2 portions of fish every week, 1 of which should be oily, for example, salmon, mackerel, sardines)
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts such as vegetable oils.

If eating foods and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar, have these less often and in small amounts.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide)



## Weight gain

After a transplant you may find a general improvement in your appetite and a less restricted diet allows you to eat a greater range of foods. Steroids can also increase your appetite. This can lead to unwanted weight gain. This is likely to happen more in the first 6 months after a transplant, so this is a time to be very careful.

You may have had a poor appetite in the past. An increase in weight may be good. It is important not to gain too much weight and to stay within the healthy weight range for your height.

Being overweight can increase your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Remember – everything you eat and drink counts. You will gain weight if you eat more food (energy) than your body uses. Just eating a little extra such as 1 packet of crisps, a small bar of chocolate or a few biscuits every day could lead to a weight increase of 1lb (0.5 kg) a week.

Contact your dietitian for more information and support if you are thinking about, or trying, to lose weight.

If you have access to the internet some useful websites are:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

Advice, tips and tools to help you make the best choices about your health and wellbeing

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/weight-loss.html>

Weight loss – Food fact sheet from the British Dietetic Association

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>

Easy ways to eat well and move more

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/weight-loss-guide/Pages/losing-weight-getting-started.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/weight-loss-guide/Pages/losing-weight-getting-started.aspx)

NHS weight loss guide – free 12-week diet and exercise plan developed in association with the British Dietetic Association.



## Activity

Regular physical activity can increase your quality of life and wellbeing by helping you to:

- Lose weight
- Lower blood pressure
- Lower your blood cholesterol level
- Lower your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes
- Keep good blood glucose control if you have diabetes
- Keeps your joints moving and bones strong
- Sleep better at night and feel more alert during the day

Talk to the team involved in your care to find out how much or what type of physical activity you can safely do after a transplant.

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The amount of physical activity recommended depends on what you want to achieve.

For improved health, activity should be built up gradually to:

- 30 minutes\* of moderate intensity activity on 5 to 7 days of the week
- If you think about it, this is equal to being active for just 2% of your day!

To aid weight loss, and with the right eating plan for you:

- 45 to 60 minutes\* of moderate intensity activity on 5 to 7 days of the week

\*This is the total amount in a day. It does not have to be done all at once. It can be broken down into 10 to 15 minute sessions, which are much easier to make part of a busy day

## Do you think you will have problems doing more physical activity?

If you have problems doing a moderate intensity of activity then think about other light intensity activities such as a gentle walk, light housework.

Mix your activity with socialising, for example, walking with a friend can be both enjoyable and motivational.

Any activity that reduces the amount of time you are sat is good.

If you have access to the internet, some useful websites are:

Kidney Care UK: [kidneycareuk.org/kidney-disease-information/living-with-kidney-disease/exercise-and-keeping-fit/](http://kidneycareuk.org/kidney-disease-information/living-with-kidney-disease/exercise-and-keeping-fit/)

## Post transplant diabetes mellitus (PTDM)

Anti-rejection medication - steroid (prednisolone) and immunosuppression (Prograf, Adoport) may cause high blood glucose levels.

If you have

- a family history of diabetes,
- previously been told that you have raised blood glucose or glucose intolerance
- are overweight

you may be at a higher risk of developing diabetes after your transplant.

Following a healthy balanced diet, taking regular exercise and keeping to a sensible weight is important to prevent and manage diabetes.

Your blood glucose level will be monitored regularly. Your doctor may refer you to a dietitian. Early detection and treatment can help stop complications of diabetes.

If you had diabetes before your transplant you may find that your blood glucose levels are higher after your transplant. Your blood glucose level will be monitored and your medication can be altered if needed.

If you have access to the internet some useful websites are:

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>

<https://www.kidney.org.uk/diabetes-after-transplantation>

Please discuss with your doctor, home care nurse, dietitian or pharmacist if you have any questions or would like further information.

## Bone health

### 1. Calcium

Steroid treatment for a long period of time may cause thinning of the bones (osteoporosis). To reduce the risk:

- Keep active
- Avoid smoking
- Have a healthy diet
- Aim to have at least 3 to 4 portions of calcium rich foods in a day

### Sources of calcium

#### Best sources

- Milk – all types including fortified plant-based milk (for example, soya, rice, oat, nut). Check the labels of plant-based milks to make sure that they are fortified with calcium.
- Hard cheeses
- Plain or fruit yoghurt, lassi
- Tofu
- Tinned fish especially sardines and pilchards (if the bones are eaten)
- Sesame seeds and tahini

Try to choose the lower fat varieties of milk, cheese and yoghurt.

#### Good sources

- Cottage cheese
- Pulses especially baked beans, soya beans, broad beans, red kidney beans and chick peas
- Nuts – almonds, brazil nuts, hazel nuts
- White bread and white flour products
- Breakfast cereals fortified with calcium

### Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps calcium to be absorbed by the body. It can be found in

- oily fish like mackerel
- fortified breakfast cereals
- fortified spreads
- eggs

The action of sunlight on the skin is also a source of vitamin D. It is important to be careful after a transplant as immunosuppression medication may put you at a higher risk of skin cancer. If you are concerned about your vitamin D level, please speak to your doctor. They can measure your level and prescribe a supplement if needed.

## 2. Phosphate

Often, after your transplant, the level of phosphate in your blood may be too low. Eating phosphate-rich foods may help to raise this level. Your doctor may prescribe you phosphate supplement tablets if you need them.

If you are vegetarian and eat little dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yoghurt, ask your doctor if you need phosphate supplements.

### Best sources

- Meat
- Fish – especially tinned fish with bones (if the bones are eaten)
- Milk – choose lower fat varieties
- Cheese
- Yoghurt
- Naan bread
- Scones
- Malted milk drinks and drinking chocolate (when made with milk)
- Milk puddings – such as rice pudding, semolina

### Good sources

- Wholemeal bread
- Brown rice
- Pulses – baked beans, red kidney beans, lentils, broad beans
- Nuts
- Bran rich cereals for example, All bran, bran flakes, muesli
- Eggs (particularly the yolk)

If you are trying to raise your phosphate intake and you

- have weight gain that is not needed and / or
- have a high cholesterol level,

choose

- low fat versions of milk, yoghurt and cheese
- lean meat and trim the fat off.

Speak to your dietitian for more advice.



## Referral to the renal dietetic service as an outpatient

If you would like to see a renal dietitian to ask any questions and go through your blood results, please ask your transplant surgical team or renal pharmacist to refer you to the renal dietitians

You will then be contacted by our Central Booking Service to let you make an appointment at a time that is right for you. Please note that we also offer booked telephone review appointments.

We aim to make sure that our dietary information sheets are up to date, relevant and easy to follow. We welcome comments and feedback on our dietary information sheets so speak with your dietitian or contact us by writing to:

Renal Dietitians office Leicester General Hospital Gwendolen Road Leicester LE5 4PW

## Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about your diet after a kidney transplant, contact your renal dietitian (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm).

If you are calling outside of these times, please leave a message and we will call you back.

Contact number for Leicester Renal Dietitians: 0116 258 8002.

If you are under the care of a renal dietitian outside of Leicestershire, please contact your local service.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અસ્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)