University Hospitals of Leicester
NHS Trust

Kidney disease: dietary advice when you first start haemodialysis

Dietetics

Information for Patients

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Introduction

Starting dialysis can bring changes to your daily routine. Some people feel unwell at the time they start dialysis. Others do not feel any different to normal.

How you feel can change your appetite and the way you eat. A dietitian can help you during this time. They will get in touch with you in the first month after you start dialysis. If you want to speak to a dietitian sooner, you can contact them using the details below.

Dietitians are part of the team who look after you, along with the doctors and nurses. You may be asked to make some changes to your diet as part of your treatment. Your dietitian will help you with these.

Everyone needs different information. This depends on your health, any other conditions you have, and how ready you feel to learn new things. We will work with you to help you reach your goals and stay as well as you can. Some people have met dietitians before, and others have not. This is a good time for everyone to start fresh.

This leaflet gives you some starting information about food and drink now that you are having dialysis. We can talk about this more when we get in touch with you.

Contact details for the dietitian:

Name: ……………………………………………………………………………

Telephone number: ……………………………………………………………………………

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Starting dialysis

Appetite

If you have been eating less than usual or food has tasted different, this should start to improve. Many people find they begin eating more again within the first few weeks of dialysis.

This is because the waste products that were building up in your blood are now being cleaned from your body each time you have treatment.

Balance of fluid in your body

Some people start dialysis with extra fluid in their body. This is called fluid overload. It can cause swollen ankles or legs, and it can make you feel a bit breathless. Too much fluid is not good for your heart because it has to work harder.

Other people may not have any signs of fluid overload. The nurses will ask you about your symptoms to help plan your treatment.

If you have fluid overload or not depends on how much pee your kidneys are making and how much fluid you drink. It is normal for the amount of pee you make to go down over time after starting dialysis. For some people this happens quickly and for others it happens slowly over months or years.

Fluid overload happens when you take in more fluid than your body can get rid of as pee. Dialysis helps by removing extra fluid during your treatment.

Using your weight to check fluid

Your weight is a helpful way to check how much fluid is in your body. You will be weighed before and after each dialysis session.

- Your weight before dialysis shows how much fluid has built up since your last treatment.
- Your weight after dialysis shows how much fluid has been removed.

It is better not to remove too much fluid in one treatment, as this can make you feel unwell. For most people, removing less than 2kg (2000ml) is best. If you have a smaller body size, it is usually best to drink even less. If you often need more than 2kg taken off, it means you are building up too much fluid and your heart is working harder than it should.

Your whole care team can help you avoid fluid overload and stay as well as possible.

Avoiding fluid overload

You cannot change how much pee your body makes. The main way to avoid fluid overload is to notice how much fluid you take in. **Fluid intake includes:**

- all drinks
- the liquid you use to take tablets
- milk on cereal
- nutritional supplement drinks like Fortisip or Ensure
- "wet" foods like gravy, sauces, yoghurt, milk puddings, jelly and ice lollies

Tips to help you manage your fluid intake

Start to notice:

- how many drinks you have,
- how much fluid you use with tablets,
- how wet your meals are,

If you are building up too much fluid, you will need to reduce the amount you take in.

Some people find it helpful to measure how much pee they pass from time to time. This can show how things are changing. The staff can give you a container if you want to do this.

Others find it useful to write down how much fluid they drink. Measure the cups, glasses and mugs you normally use. For puddings and yoghurts, count the fluid as half of the weight or volume.
For example, 200ml of custard counts as about 100ml of fluid.

You do not need to count the fluid in fruit and vegetables. You also do not need to count the fluid in foods like rice or pasta that are cooked in water.

Reducing your fluid can be hard. Some people feel thirsty a lot, and others are simply used to drinking more. Your care team can help you find ways to manage this.

Helping with thirst

- Use a smaller cup.
- Sip drinks more slowly and spread out your fluid allowance over the day.
- Stay cool, avoid overheating and excess thirst.
- Use an ice-cube in place of a drink.
- Limit your intake of salt and salty/very spicy foods. This will help to reduce your thirst.
- You can stimulate saliva and stop your mouth feeling dry by sucking a slice of lemon or lime, sugar free mints or boiled sweets and chewing sugar free gum.

Salt

Too much salt is not healthy for anyone. It is even more important to limit salt when you are having dialysis. Salt can raise your blood pressure and make you feel more thirsty, which can make it harder to manage your fluid intake.

Try to use less salt when cooking and at mealtimes. You can add flavour by using herbs and spices, such as garlic.

It helps to avoid foods that are high in salt, like many processed foods. Food labels use colour coding. If the salt section on the food label is red then the food is high in salt.

Choose more fresh or frozen foods such as fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, poultry, eggs and pulses. These are often lower in salt and better for your health.

Other diet restrictions

If you were given diet advice before you started dialysis, keep following it until you speak with the dietitian again. The dietitian will be able to look at the notes from the person who saw you before and decide if anything needs to change. This is a good chance to start fresh and make sure you understand what is best for you now that you are on dialysis.

Useful information

Patients Knows Best www.patientsknowbest.com

- You are able to see your medical records and blood results by registering with a national website called Patients Know Best.
- You will need to go onto the website and use the 'Register' button. This website should link into the NHS app on your phone.

Kidney Care UK: www.kidneycareuk.org

- This website has lots of information for people with kidney disease.
Use the QR code for access to Kidney Kitchen for kidney-friendly recipes.

Summary

- The dietitian will contact you in the first few weeks after you start dialysis to help with your diet. You can phone sooner if you have questions you want answered before then.
- If your appetite has been poor, this should start to get better over the next few weeks.
- Start to notice your weight and how it changes from one dialysis session to the next. This will help you learn about your fluid balance.
- Start to notice how much fluid you are taking in. You may not need to make changes at first, but over time this is something you may need to manage.
- Think about how much salt you use and how many salty foods you eat. Try to find ways to reduce the amount of salt in your diet.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہِ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
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