

Nutrition and Diet After Transplant

Good nutrition is important both before and after transplant surgery. During the first few weeks after your surgery, eat at least three meals a day and one or two snacks between meals to help you recover. After your healing process, you need to continue to take care of your transplanted organ by avoiding weight gain. The following nutrition guidelines may help prevent complications.

First Months After Transplant

The first two months after your transplant, your body needs adequate nutrition to promote healing, fight infection, provide energy and gain back any weight you may have lost. You may not feel hungry or foods may taste different while you are taking large amounts of medicine. You still need to eat to get well until your appetite returns. To boost your calories for the day, eat snacks between meals. Snack choices with lots of nutrients include: lean meat sandwiches, peanut butter, yogurt and milkshakes. Your dietitian may suggest a nutritional supplement.

Your Diet At Home

- Long-term nutritional complications after transplant can be prevented. Complications include:
 - ▶ Steroid-induced diabetes
 - ▶ Excessive weight gain

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Learn more about your health care.

- ▶ Elevated blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- ▶ Bone loss
- ▶ High blood pressure
- To help prevent or limit long-term complications, follow these guidelines:
 - ▶ Eat smaller portions and avoid second helpings.
 - ▶ Limit fat (fats give you more than twice as many calories as carbohydrates).
 - ▶ Choose lean meats.
 - ▶ Avoid too many sweets such as cakes, pies, cookies, ice cream, candy and sugary beverages including regular soda.
 - ▶ For dessert choose fresh fruit, angel food cake with fruit topping, vanilla wafers or animal crackers.
 - ▶ Choose low-fat snacks, such as fresh fruit and vegetables (unless your doctor tells you to follow a low bacterial diet), low-salt pretzels and low fat popcorn.
 - ▶ Be more active.
 - ▶ Choose an activity you enjoy.
 - ▶ Start out slowly. You may only be able to walk or bicycle around the block at first.
 - ▶ Exercise at least 30 to 40 minutes, 4 to 5 times a week.
 - ▶ Exercise will help you control your weight, increase your strength and stamina, and reduce stress.
 - ▶ Take control of your weight. By exercising and not overeating, you can keep your weight under control.
- **Sodium**
 - ▶ Steroids and cyclosporine can make you retain fluids and swell.
 - ▶ Avoid salt and salty foods. If you eat a lot of salt or salty foods, you may have more swelling.
 - ▶ Foods high in sodium to avoid:
 - Processed meats and cheeses
 - Nearly all canned and bottled foods except fruit

- Fast foods and most restaurant foods
- Convenience foods like Hamburger Helper, rice mixes, Ramen Noodles and potato mixes
- Chips, crackers, and foods with additional sauce
- ▶ In place of salt, use herb and spice blends like Mrs. Dash and McCormick Blends (only the salt free ones).
- ▶ Salt substitutes are not recommended due to the potassium content. Consult your doctor or dietitian.
- **Cholesterol**
 - ▶ Transplant patients are at risk for heart disease. One reason is the weight gain that some patients experience. Also, cyclosporine and steroids can raise cholesterol levels.
 - ▶ Limit egg yolks to 4 a week or use egg substitute.
 - ▶ Use nonfat dairy products.
 - ▶ Trim fat from meat. Remove skin from poultry.
 - ▶ Avoid butter, lard shortening, ice cream and sausage. Use small amounts of vegetable oil (canola or olive oil) and margarine.
 - ▶ Increase fiber in your diet. The fiber in oats, beans, fruits and vegetables may help lower cholesterol.
- **Steroid-induced diabetes**
 - ▶ A normal fasting blood sugar level is less than 110 mg/dl.
 - ▶ Cyclosporine and steroids may cause your blood sugar to rise.
 - ▶ If your blood sugar continues to be high, you have developed diabetes.
 - ▶ Your chances of developing diabetes are increased if you have a family history of diabetes.
 - ▶ The following are symptoms of diabetes:
 - Increased thirst
 - Need to urinate often
 - Increased hunger
 - Easily tired

- Blurred vision
- Unintentional weight loss
- ▶ If you develop diabetes, you must check your blood sugar daily. Avoid sweets and keep your blood sugar at normal levels.
- ▶ Your dietitian will help develop a meal plan to help manage your diabetes. It is important to:
 - Be at a healthy weight.
 - Eat 3 meals a day.
 - Limit sugar, desserts, and other foods high in sugar as well as large amounts of bread, rice, pasta, potatoes and other starchy foods.
- **Potassium**
 - ▶ Cyclosporine and tacrolimus can make you retain potassium.
 - ▶ Diuretics such as lasix may make you lose too much potassium.
 - ▶ If your doctor tells you that your potassium is too high or too low, refer to this list. If your potassium is too low, eat more high potassium foods. Foods high in potassium include:
 - Tomatoes and tomato products, V-8 juice
 - Cantaloupes, honeydew melons
 - Bananas
 - Prunes, prune juice
 - Dried beans and peas
 - Raw broccoli, spinach
 - Potatoes
 - Oranges and orange juice
- **Calcium**
 - ▶ Calcium is a mineral that makes your bones and teeth strong.
 - ▶ Steroids make it difficult to absorb calcium. If you have low calcium levels this may lead to fractures.
 - ▶ Eat foods high in calcium. Three 8-ounce glasses of low-fat milk provides most of your calcium. If you do not drink milk or eat dairy products, ask your doctor for a calcium supplement.

- **Coffee, Tea, Caffeine and Alcohol**

- ▶ You have a greater chance of getting ulcers since you take steroids.
- ▶ Coffee and tea may aggravate ulcers.
- ▶ Limit caffeinated diet beverages to 2 servings a day, especially in the first months following your transplant.
- ▶ Alcohol should be avoided.

Vitamins

If you eat a heart healthy diet, you will probably be getting enough vitamins and minerals. Nonetheless, if you want to take a regular multivitamin, read the label and be sure it does not provide more than 200% of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA).

Summary

- Eat foods from all the food groups in moderation and avoid too much fat and sugar. Do not gain weight (unless advised by your doctor) when you go home.
- Ask your doctor if a sodium restriction is necessary. Whether or not you need to limit salt depends on your condition and lab values. If a sodium restriction is necessary, follow a No Added Salt Diet (4000 mg sodium a day) where no additional salt is used in cooking or at the table.
- Consume 3 servings of milk a day. If you do not eat dairy products, ask your doctor about a calcium supplement.

- **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**