

# Healthy Eating After Your Kidney Transplant

**Here are some healthy tips to consider after your kidney transplant. Your Registered Dietitian will work with you to find an eating plan that is right for you.**

This handout will help you learn about:

- Healthy eating tips after your surgery
- Ways to keep a healthy lifestyle and a balanced diet

If you have any questions about your diet after your kidney transplant, speak with your Registered Dietitian.

## My Registered Dietitian is:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Healthy eating tips after your surgery

To keep you feeling your best after your surgery, you may need to eat more of some foods, and less of others.

### **Protein and energy**

Your body uses protein and energy for many reasons, including helping you heal after your surgery and to fight infections.

In the first 6 to 8 weeks after your transplant, it is important to eat **more protein** than you normally would. This helps to replace the protein that was lost during your surgery and your hospital stay.

Choose protein sources such as:

- chicken and turkey
- fish
- red meat
- eggs
- beans and lentils
- dairy products such as milk, cheese, and yogurt

Speak to your Registered Dietitian if you have questions about protein. They can help to find ways to increase your protein that suit your preferences.

### **Fluid**

It is important to drink enough fluids each day. You will need **more fluids** after your transplant than before to help your kidney filter wastes and clear out toxins.

Your transplant team will let you know how much fluid you should drink each day. Choose water more often.

## **Sodium**

Salt is a major source of sodium. Too much sodium causes your body to hold on to fluid. Eating less salt can help you to maintain or lower your blood pressure and the amount of fluid in your body.

There is usually enough salt in foods naturally to meet your daily needs.

Here are some tips to help lower how much salt you eat:

- Avoid adding salt to your food during or after cooking
- Avoid processed foods and take-out foods
- Limit canned foods, or choose canned or pre-packaged foods that are low-sodium or labelled no added salt
- Look for sodium levels in food that you wouldn't normally think of as salty—for example, frozen foods, processed meats and cheeses, and beverages
- Check the nutrition levels and choose foods that are less than 5% of your daily intake of sodium. Or, aim to have no more than 2000 mg of sodium a day

## **Potassium**

Your body uses potassium to help your heart beat regularly and to control your muscles. After your transplant, your transplant team will tell you if you need to add or to limit potassium in your diet.

Food that is high in potassium include:

- dried fruit, fruit cake, fruit bars
- bananas
- oranges or orange juice
- tomatoes, tomato-based products
- potatoes, potato-based products
- beans or legumes
- avocados

Low potassium foods:

- fruits—for example, berries, pears, apples and peaches
- vegetables—for example, carrots, celery and cucumbers
- grains—for example, white rice, white bread, light rye and white pasta

## Phosphorus

Phosphorus is a mineral in our bodies that helps build our bones and keep them healthy. After a kidney transplant, you will need to add **more phosphorus** to your diet.

Good food sources of phosphorus include:

- dairy products—for example, milk, cheese, yogurt and custard
- soy milk
- whole grains—for example, breads, cereal, pasta and rice
- beans and legumes
- nuts and seeds
- lean meats, chicken, eggs, fish



## Magnesium

Magnesium helps your muscles, and to balance your blood sugar levels, and blood pressure levels. After your transplant, your magnesium levels may be low and you will need to **add more magnesium** to your diet.

Good food sources of magnesium include:

- green vegetables—for example, spinach, broccoli, leeks, zucchini, peas, cabbage and asparagus
- whole grains—for example, breads, cereal, pasta and rice
- beans and legumes
- nuts and seeds
- seafood and fresh water fish



## Ways to keep a healthy lifestyle and a balanced diet

It is important to keep a healthy lifestyle and balanced diet after your kidney transplant.

### Choose healthy fats

Everyone has a fat in their blood called “cholesterol”. If you have high levels of this fat, it can lead to heart disease. Your body makes the amount of cholesterol that you need. What you eat will also affect your cholesterol levels.

Use the tips in this chart to help you choose the healthy fats and limit those that are bad for you (or high in cholesterol).

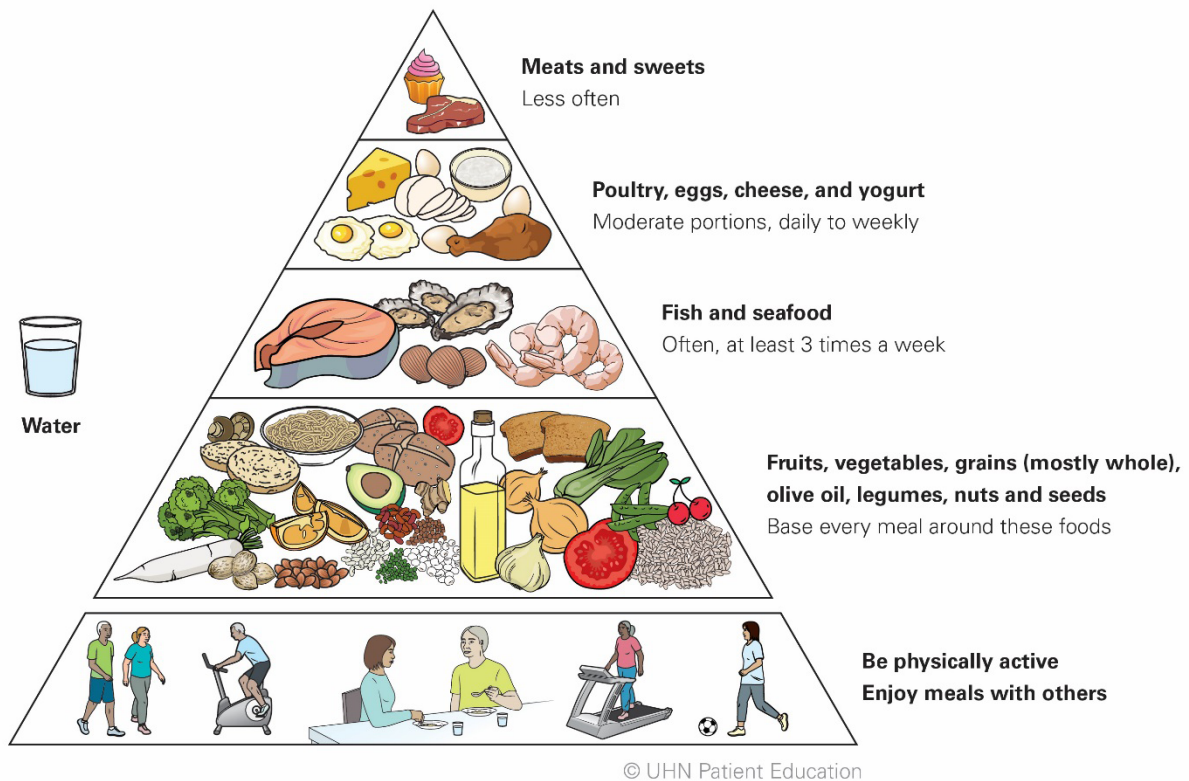
Healthy fats	Unhealthy fats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• most vegetable oils (such as olive oil, canola oil, safflower oil)</li><li>• skim or low-fat milk</li><li>• avocados</li><li>• unsalted nuts</li><li>• fatty fish (salmon)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• butter, lard</li><li>• fat and skin on meats and chicken</li><li>• solid vegetable cooking fat</li><li>• full fat cream and milk</li></ul>

### Eating the Mediterranean way

The Mediterranean diet can help you to control your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugars.

To follow this diet, you can:

- Eat more foods from plants (such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes)
- Eat more fish and seafood
- Eat more healthy fats
- Have less dairy, poultry and eggs
- Have very little red meat (such as beef, pork, lamb) and sweets



## Manage your weight

Many people gain weight after transplant. This may be caused by medications or changes to diet or activity level.

To help you manage your weight, try these tips.

- ✓ Eat a balanced diet
- ✓ Do regular exercise approved by your healthcare team
- ✓ Reduce or manage stress
- ✓ Get enough sleep

### **Knowing about food safety**

Since you are taking anti-rejection medication after your transplant, your body's immune system will be weaker. It's important to wash your hands often when preparing food and choose safer foods when eating out.

To learn more about food safety, talk with your health care team or see more information at the end of this handout.

### **Avoiding medication interactions**

Grapefruit, grapefruit juice, pomelo and pomelo products change the way your body absorbs and breaks down your medications.

Do not drink grapefruit and pomelo juice or eat grapefruit and pomelos in any form until you have talked to your health care team about possible medication interactions.

## My notes

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## More information

Advice about everyday eating by the Dietitians of Canada

- Website: [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca)

Canada's Food Guide

- Website: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en>

Health Canada—Safe food handling for immunocompromised individuals

- PDF: <http://bit.ly/2JaRfkX>

NHS—Living with Kidney Transplant (see information about medication interactions)

- Website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/kidney-transplant/living-with](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/kidney-transplant/living-with)



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