

Good Nutrition after Your Transplantation

The diet of a transplant patient should be well-balanced with a variety of foods. Your diet should contain foods from all food groups—dairy, meats & poultry, fruits, vegetables, cereals & grains, and healthy fats. In addition, the following guidelines are recommended.

Short-term nutritional management (for up to 6-8 weeks after transplantation)

For about two months after surgery, your diet is designed to help you heal and reduce the side effects of the transplant medications you are taking.

- Eat high protein foods to overcome protein breakdown caused by high doses of prednisone. Good sources of protein are meat, poultry, fish, beans and dairy products.
- Limit foods high in simple sugar, including: candy, cookies, jam, Jell-O, juice, honey, soda.
- Avoid salt and limit high sodium foods to prevent fluid retention and high blood pressure.

These recommendations will help improve your health by promoting wound healing, reducing muscle wasting, and preventing medication-induced diabetes and high blood pressure commonly seen after transplantation.

- In addition, we will monitor the potassium and magnesium in your blood. If needed, we will adjust your dietary intake of these nutrients.

Food Safety

Food should be prepared and stored in a safe way to prevent infection. Your medications can make it hard for your body to fight germs, so food safety is especially important after transplant.

Follow these guidelines for at least 6 months after your transplant surgery and during times of rejection (and high doses of medication).

- Wash your hands with soap and hot water before handling food and before eating.
- Thaw all foods in a refrigerator and properly refrigerate cold foods.
- Use a separate cutting board for raw meats, chicken, turkey, fish and other seafood.
- Discard cutting boards that are worn out and hard to clean. Use plastic or silicone cutting boards instead of wood ones.
- Cook all meats, chicken, turkey, fish, seafood and eggs until well done.
- Avoid eating sushi and raw or undercooked seafood.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables with cool running water.
- Only buy milk, cheese, and other dairy products that are pasteurized
- Cook eggs until both the yolk and white are firm. Pasteurized eggs or egg substitutes may be a better choice for scrambled eggs or omelets.
- Avoid eating foods with raw unpasteurized eggs (for example, hollandaise sauce, Caesar dressing, cookie dough, cake batter and homemade eggnog)
- Avoid cheese with mold, for example: blue, stilton, Roquefort, and gorgonzola

Food Safety Suggestions for Dining Out

- Order meat, seafood, poultry cooked to “medium well” at restaurants. If the protein is still pink on the inside, send it back for additional cooking.
- Avoid salad bars, buffet bars, and street/market vendors where food may be kept at inadequate temperatures.
- Avoid eating at restaurants with low health inspection scores (aim for scores 95+).

Long-Term Nutrition Management

Many transplant patients have nutrition related problems in the months and years following their transplants. These include excessive weight gain (due to an increased appetite) and high blood cholesterol, which are caused by steroids and other medications. The best management for you includes weight control by following a “Heart Healthy” diet and exercise. Here are some guidelines that will help reduce the risk of heart disease and excessive weight gain.

Eat Heart Healthy

- Read food labels carefully to avoid foods high in saturated fat or trans fat. Some of these foods include lard, butter, shortening, full fat dairy, red meats, sausage and bacon. Coconut and palm oil are saturated fats found in convenience baked goods, whipped toppings, coffee creamers and fried foods.
- Choose low-fat milk and other low-fat or nonfat dairy products.
- Limit egg yolks to 1 per day. Many recipes can be made with egg whites or egg substitutes.
- Choose the leanest varieties of beef and pork. Avoid fried or processed meats.
- Poultry (no skin), beans and fish are excellent selections when cooked without added fat.
- To increase the fiber, eat more fresh fruits, raw vegetables and whole grains. A high fiber diet may also help lower your cholesterol.
- Reduce your total calories by eating smaller portions and avoiding second helpings.
- Continue to limit salt intake and high-sodium foods to help control blood pressure.
- Continue to limit simple sugar, especially if you are overweight or have difficulty to control blood sugar levels.

Low-Fat Cooking Tips

- Microwave, broil, grill, roast or steam foods without adding fat.
- Use nonstick sprays or cookware.
- Trim all visible fat off meat, and remove skin from poultry.
- Experiment with reducing the amount of oil you use in baking. Often your recipes will taste just as good with less oil.

Keep Your Body Moving...with Exercise

Regular exercise will help you control your cholesterol levels, blood pressure and weight. Exercise also releases tension and helps boost your energy. Exercise encourages positive changes in other lifestyle habits such as eating, too! Talk to your doctor about enrolling into a pulmonary or cardiac rehabilitation program, as appropriate for you.

Other Nutritional Considerations

- Vitamin and mineral requirements can generally be met with a well-balanced diet unless otherwise indicated by your doctor and dietitian.
- To keep your bones strong after your transplant, make sure you are getting enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet (unless your doctor gives other directions). Here are some good food sources of calcium and vitamin D to include in your meals - yogurt, milk, cheese, spinach, kale, sardines, salmon and foods with added calcium and vitamin D, like orange juice, soy milk and cereals.
- Always consult with your transplant team before taking any herbal remedies or when using any herbal supplements. You are taking special drugs that might react with the herbs. Some herbs can be toxic or cause other complications.
- Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice. A compound naturally found in grapefruit can make some medications build up to a high level in your blood. This high level can be very dangerous. Other related fruits to avoid include pomelos, Seville oranges (bitter oranges), starfruit, and pomegranate. Juices made with these fruits should also be avoided.

What if I have more questions?

- A Registered Dietitian is available both in the hospital and at outpatient Transplant Clinic to discuss any dietary changes and to develop an eating plan best suited to your nutritional needs.

Notes: