

## Nutrition

### *Before and after a kidney/pancreas transplant*

*In this chapter, you will learn about the importance of watching your diet before and after your transplant.*

#### **Before Transplant**

Assess your diet, lifestyle, and exercise before transplant surgery. Make a plan, decide what you want to change, and take small steps.

Everything you do to stay healthy and strong before transplant will help your recovery. This includes:

- Following all the dietary guidelines your providers have given you.
- Eating less salt and fewer processed foods.
- Reaching and maintaining your target weight.
- Staying active and keeping your muscles strong. Exercise will keep your weight on target and reduce weakness after surgery.



*Good nutrition is very important, both before and after transplant.*

If you have diabetes, also work with your team to maintain good blood sugar and A1C levels.

#### **After Transplant**

Your first few weeks after transplant surgery will be full of changes. You will start new medicines and your diet will change in many ways.

Once you have recovered from surgery, you will learn to make long-term lifestyle changes to keep your new kidney healthy.

#### **Right after Surgery**

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Your team will give you a fluid target, usually between 2 to 3 liters (68 to 100 ounces) a day.

- **Eat protein-rich foods to help healing.** Some examples of these are:

- Nuts, nut butters, and seeds
- Beans and legumes
- Dairy products and eggs
- Fish, poultry, and red meat

Check with your transplant dietitian if you want to use nutrition drinks or protein powder.

- **Eat as desired.** You may have a low appetite, feel full quickly, and be constipated. These symptoms will ease over time.
- **Eat a regular diet.** You do not need to follow a renal diet after transplant. Your team will tell you if any diet restrictions are needed.

## Special Concerns

Your dietitian will give you a handout called “Nutrition After Your Transplant.” It gives more details on everything in this chapter and will help guide your food choices after your transplant surgery.

Here is a basic overview of some special dietary concerns you may have:

- **Blood sugar levels.** Your blood sugar levels may rise due to new medicines and stress of surgery. If you have diabetes, your blood sugars will likely need fine tuning. You may need to make changes in your insulin or diabetes medicines. Good blood sugar control helps with wound healing and limits infections.
- **Potassium levels.** You may have high levels of potassium in your blood while your body adjusts to new medicines and your new kidney slowly starts working. If your potassium levels are above normal, avoid high-potassium foods and beverages until your team says it is OK.
- **Phosphate levels.** Phosphate levels are usually low after transplant. We will ask you to eat dairy products and whole grains to raise your phosphorus levels.
- **Magnesium levels.** The drug tacrolimus changes your magnesium levels. Your team will ask you to increase the amount of high-magnesium foods you eat. We will give you a list of these foods. Report any muscle cramping to your providers and take all supplements that are prescribed.
- **Food safety.** Make safe food choices after transplant to reduce the risk of infection and illness. You will receive detailed guidelines about preparing and storing food, and what to do when eating in a restaurant.

You will see your dietitian in the hospital after transplant and also in clinic after discharge. We will make sure you have contact information for your providers so you can call or email with questions about your diet and food choices.

## After 3 Months

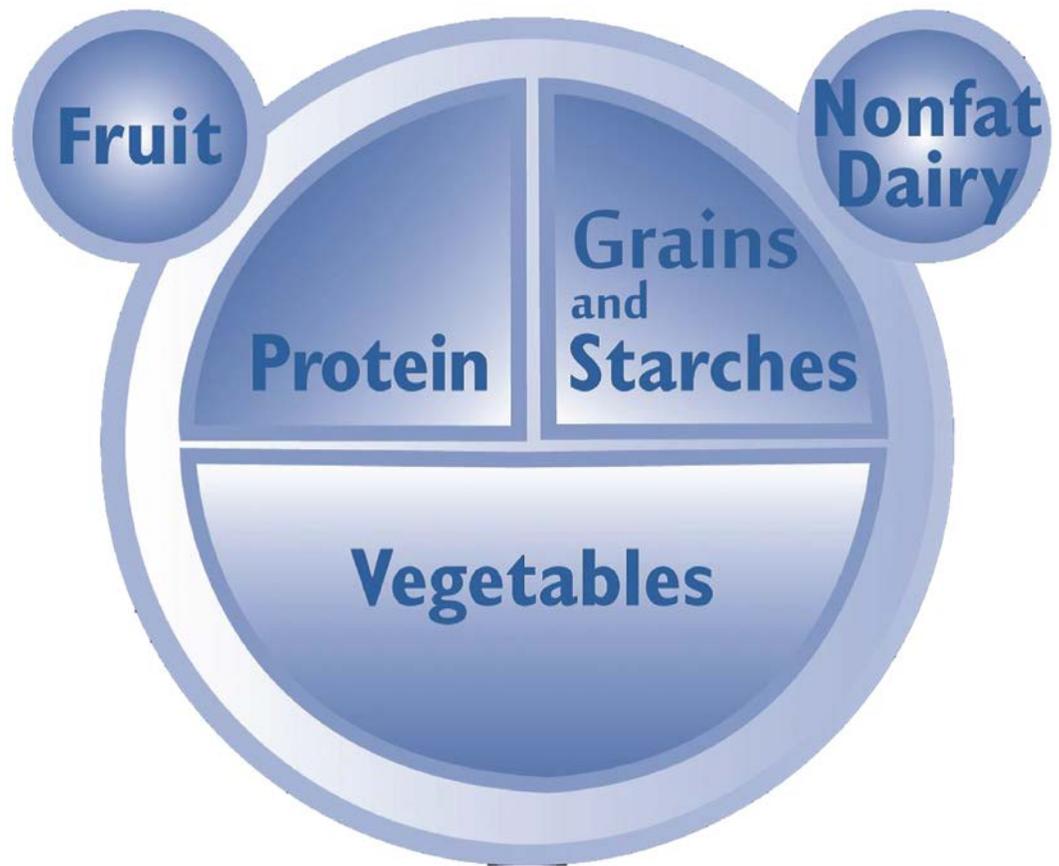
By 3 months after transplant surgery, you should see these milestones:

- Incision is healed from the inside out
- Blood levels are stable
- Medicines have been reduced
- Energy has improved

You are now ready to set long-term dietary goals to keep you and your new organ healthy:

- **Limit sodium.** The American Heart Association suggests 2,000 mg sodium a day to keep your blood pressure in the healthy range and to prevent fluid retention. Watch your intake of table salt, condiments, processed foods, and frozen meals, as these items contain a lot of sodium.
- **Keep your food choices heart-healthy.** Transplant drugs can raise your cholesterol and other blood fats. To keep these in control:
  - Eat brightly colored fruit and vegetables
  - Eat high-fiber foods such as whole grains and fresh produce
  - Use healthy oils such as peanut, olive, and canola oil
  - Limit saturated animal fats
  - Include fish weekly
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Prednisone can increase your appetite and desire for sweets. It also breaks down muscle. It's easy to gain weight after transplant if you are not careful. To keep your weight in balance, make exercise a part of your daily life and make healthy food choices.
- **Eat a balanced diet.** Use the graphic on page 4 to guide your food choices:
  - Fill  $\frac{1}{2}$  of your plate with fresh or cooked vegetables.
  - Fill  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your plate with protein foods.
  - Fill  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your plate with grains or other starches.

Always include vegetables, fruit, and dairy to keep your bones strong and blood pressure under control.



*Healthy Plate Food Model*

## Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

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