Nutrition

After your kidney/pancreas transplant

You’ve heard it before: Eating healthy foods helps keep you healthy. Assess your eating habits and make any needed changes before your surgery. These changes will help you feel better, heal faster, and be in the best shape possible for transplant surgery.

The Basics

Your basic nutritional guidelines are:

- Eat a variety of foods.
- Reach and stay at a healthy weight.
- Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, and whole-grain products.
- Eat the right amount of protein for healing and to build muscle.
- Choose foods that are low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
- Limit salt (sodium) and sugar.
- You may also be asked to limit your potassium intake for a while after your transplant. Ask your dietitian how long you might need to do this.

Before Transplant

Before transplant, limit the amount of salt in your diet:

- Do not add any extra salt to your food.
- Limit your intake of condiments such as mustard, ketchup, relish, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and others.
- Limit fast-food meals. They are high in salt.
- Limit processed meats such as ham, bacon, corned beef, sausage, and packaged lunch meats.
- Choose low-salt, low-fat chips, pretzels, and crackers.
- Learn to read food labels. Look for “sodium free,” “salt free,” “very low in sodium,” and “light in sodium” (which means the sodium is reduced by half).

You may also need to adjust your potassium and phosphorus intake. This will depend on your kidney function and lab values. Your dietitian will help you choose foods that are best for you.
After Transplant

After your transplant, you will want to keep up your healthy eating habits. You will have other special nutritional needs as well. You will receive the detailed booklet *Nutrition After Your Transplant*. It covers:

- Nutritional effects of your medications
- Your protein and calorie needs
- Sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium
- Your fluid needs
- Maintaining your weight with diet and exercise
- Blood sugar control
- Food safety

Changes in Your Diet

Even though your kidney may be working properly, your medications may cause side effects that will require you to make changes in your diet.

These are guidelines only. It is best to talk about your specific dietary needs with a dietitian or diet technician.

Eat Enough Protein

If you are taking prednisone, you will need extra protein. Prednisone causes you to lose muscle mass, and protein helps build muscle. Protein also promotes wound healing.

Your dietitian will tell you how much protein is right for you and will provide dietary guidelines to help you meet your needs.

Limit Sodium

You will still need to limit the amount of sodium in your diet. How strict you will need to be will depend on your symptoms. Some medications such as prednisone can cause you to retain fluids. Tacrolimus may raise your blood pressure. Limiting sodium will help control these side effects.

Lower Fat and Cholesterol

Both tacrolimus and prednisone will cause your blood cholesterol to rise. You will be given lots of tips about how to lower the fat and cholesterol in your diet. The booklet *Nutrition After Your Transplant* lists helpful cookbooks and websites.
**Limit Potassium**

Tacrolimus can cause a temporary rise in your potassium level. You will likely need to limit your intake of potassium-rich foods for a short time.

**Supplement with Magnesium**

The medicines you will be taking can cause magnesium loss. You will be given magnesium tablets, and you can also eat more foods that are rich in magnesium.

Magnesium will likely be a big issue after transplant. Pay close attention to the list of high-magnesium foods you will need. You will need to eat these because the new kidney will excrete extra magnesium from your body, and you will need to replace it.

**Supplement with Calcium**

A long-term side effect of taking prednisone is bone and joint weakness. You will need to eat plenty of foods rich in calcium to help keep your bones healthy. Also, a calcium supplement will be prescribed for you.

**Drink Plenty of Fluids**

You will need to increase your fluid intake after your transplant. It is important to stay hydrated to help your new kidney function. Your health care providers will tell you how much water and other fluids you should drink.

If all goes as expected, you should drink 2 to 3 liters of water and other fluids every day.

**Watch Your Weight**

You will be asked to weigh yourself daily. Weight gain due to fluid retention can be a sign of rejection.

Your appetite may increase as a result of feeling better and taking prednisone. Follow the guidelines in the booklet *Nutrition After Your Transplant* to help keep your weight in balance. Keep in mind that exercise is a key factor in weight control. Ask to talk with the transplant dietitian if you need help gaining or losing weight.

If you have any questions or concerns about your nutrition and dietary needs, call the transplant dietitian at 206-598-4163.
Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Transplant Services:
206-598-8881