Patient Information

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Nutrition and Dietetics

Kidney disease - Eating well after a kidney transplant (short-term)

This leaflet is for patients who have had a kidney transplant. Please follow it only under the guidance of your dietitian.

Once your new kidney starts working well, you can enjoy a wider and healthier range of foods. This leaflet will help guide you through your recovery during the first 0-3 months after your transplant, while your immunosuppressant medication is at its highest.

For advice on staying healthy in the longer-term, please see “Kidney disease - Eating well after a kidney transplant (long-term),” included in your information pack from the transplant nurses before your operation.

If you have any questions, please contact the kidney dietitians on 024 7696 6151.

Key points:

1. Eating well immediately after your transplant: protein, vitamins, and minerals
2. Gradually relax previous potassium restrictions
3. Follow food safety advice
4. Avoid certain foods after a kidney transplant
5. Fluid

1. Eating well

During this time, you are recovering from surgery, and your body needs enough protein, vitamins, and minerals to help with healing. Be aware that phosphate levels can fall quickly after a transplant because of your immunosuppressive medicines.

The following foods are good source of both protein and phosphate. Try to include these foods at least twice a day:

- meat and poultry, e.g. chicken, pork, lamb, beef
- fish (especially those with edible bones)
- eggs
- dairy foods, e.g. milk, cheese, yogurt
- pulses, e.g. chickpeas, split peas, lentils, kidney beans, black-eyed beans
- vegetarian alternatives e.g. soya, Quorn, or tofu

Also:

- try to have one pint of milk a day (as a drink, or as yoghurt, custard, or hot milky drinks).
- aim to eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, which can include up to one portion of fruit juice.

2. Potassium

A successful transplant means you can start to relax your previous potassium restrictions. We recommend doing this slowly rather than having lots of high potassium foods or drinks all at once.

For example, spread out foods such as jacket potatoes, coffee, fruit juice and bananas throughout the day. Your kidney dietitian can guide you on this if needed.

1. Food Safety

After a transplant, you need to take anti-rejection medicine to help your body accept your new kidney. Examples include Tacrolimus (Prograf, Adoport), Mycophenolate mofetil (MMF), Ciclosporin (Neoral) or Prednisolone.

These medicines can increase your risk of infection, including food poisoning, so good food hygiene is **very important**.

If you get symptoms such as stomach pain, fever, being sick (vomiting), or diarrhoea, drink plenty of fluids and rest. Do not prepare or serve food for others and let your transplant team know you're unwell.

If your symptoms are serious or don’t go away, contact your GP.

Tips to reduce the risk of infection from food and drinks

Shopping and storage

- Check use-by dates and throw away food past this date.
- Avoid buying foods with damaged or broken packaging.
- Avoid deli counters and salad bars, choose sealed, pre-packed food instead.
- Take chilled or frozen foods home quickly and store as directed on the label.
- Do not overload fridges or freezers, as this can stop food from staying cold enough.
- Keep your fridge temperature between 0°C and 5°C. Store open or defrosted foods in covered containers.
- Store raw meat at the bottom of the fridge, away from ready-to-eat foods such as salad, fruit, and bread.
- Cover and store leftovers in the fridge. Do not put hot food straight into the fridge, cool it at room temperature first, then refrigerate within one hour. Take particular care with meat, poultry, fish, and rice.
- Store eggs in their box in the fridge.

Food preparation

- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly with soapy water before and after preparing food.
- Clean kitchen surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after preparing food, especially after handling raw meat, poultry, or eggs. Keep pets away from food, dishes, and worktops.
- Wash fruit and vegetables before eating or cooking.
- Use separate chopping boards and knives for raw meat and other foods to avoid cross-contamination.

Cooking

- Cook food thoroughly to kill harmful bacteria. Follow instructions on packaging or in recipes to make sure food is fully cooked.
- Defrost frozen foods completely before cooking. Never refreeze thawed food.
- Make sure food is piping hot all the way through before serving. Meats should be cooked until the juices run clear. Reheat food only once.

Eating out

- Avoid salad bars, buffets, carveries, market stalls, street outlets and takeaways where food safety may be uncertain. Choose freshly cooked food that is piping hot or properly cold.
- Take extra care when abroad, as food hygiene standards may be lower.

To check the food hygiene standards of a facility, see the food hygiene rating scheme: http://ratings.food.gov.uk

Barbecues

- Be extra careful at barbecues, as undercooked meat is a common cause of food poisoning.
- Consider cooking food in the oven or microwave first to make sure it is cooked through.

High-risk foods

a) Eggs

- Use lion-stamped eggs, these come from chickens vaccinated against Salmonella, a common bacterial infection affecting the intestines.
- Avoid eating raw eggs or foods made with raw eggs if the source is unknown. Examples include homemade mayonnaise, hollandaise sauce, meringues, eggnog, soufflé, and some mousses.
- Most packaged foods in shops are made with pasteurised eggs and are safe to eat. Examples include jarred mayonnaise or ice-cream from a freezer counter.

b) Fish and shellfish

- Do not eat raw or partially cooked fish and shellfish. This includes sushi, prawns or shrimp, clams, squid, and mussels.
- Well-cooked fish, or vacuum-packed / canned cold fish, is safe. Examples include tuna, sardines, freshly cooked fish fingers, fish cakes or shellfish.
- Avoid caviar and oysters.

c) Milk and milk products

Should be avoided	Safer alternative
Unpasteurised soft cheese (cheese not heat-treated to kill bacteria, sometimes called “raw milk cheese”)	Unpasteurised soft cheese if cooked until piping hot. Pasteurised soft cheese (check the label) Cottage cheese, mozzarella, feta, cream cheese, ricotta, halloumi, hard goat’s cheese, processed cheese slices and spreads such as Dairylea. All hard cheese such as Cheddar, Red Leicester, edam, gouda, stilton, pecorino, parmesan, and Cheshire.
Mould-ripened (white rind) soft cheeses: Brie, camembert, certain goats cheeses (e.g., chevre)	Mould-ripened cheeses if cooked until piping hot.
Blue-vein cheeses (including blue cheese salad dressings), Danish blue, Roquefort, Gorgonzola	Blue-veined cheeses if cooked until piping hot.
Homemade cheeses (e.g., labnah, paneer)	Shop bought pasteurised versions.
Cheese containing chilli peppers or other uncooked vegetables	Hard cheeses without added ingredients.

- Do not use unpasteurised milk, yoghurt, or cream.
- Avoid “prebiotic,” “probiotic,” “live” or “bio” yoghurts containing live bacteria, for example: Actimel, Activia, Vitality, Yakult.
- Yoghurts are safe if made with pasteurised milk, including natural yoghurts (most commercially produced yoghurts are safe).

d) Meat and meat alternatives

- Make sure meat and poultry are thoroughly cooked. There should be no pink meat, and juices should run clear. Avoid rare or undercooked meats such as beef carpaccio.
- Avoid pâté, including vegetable versions.
- Avoid hot cooked meats from the supermarket, for example, rotisserie chicken.
- Avoid hard cured meats such as salami and Parma ham, and meats from delicatessens.
- Avoid undercooked tofu, for example, Tempe products.

e) Water

- Water coolers can be a source of infection. Choose freshly run tap water or carbonated bottled water instead.
- Tap water is recommended over bottled water because it has a lower risk of infection. Some people may choose to boil tap water before using.
- Ice made from tap water is safer than ice from unknown sources. Make sure the ice cube tray is cleaned thoroughly before use and store in the freezer.
- If you use a filter system at home, follow the manufacturer’s instructions for regular cleaning and filter changes.
- Avoid drinking tap water when travelling outside the UK.

More information on food safety can be found on the Food Standards Agency website: https://www.food.gov.uk/food-safety

4. Foods to avoid after a kidney transplant

Some foods and supplements can interact with your anti-rejection medicines and should be avoided:

- Grapefruit and grapefruit juice
- Pomelo and pomegranate
- Star fruit
- Seville oranges (other types of orange are fine in moderation)
- Alternative medicines, such as homeopathic or herbal remedies, or high-dose vitamin supplements such as vitamin C
- Sport-enhancing supplements, like protein shakes or protein powders
- Herbal teas such as green tea, chamomile, peppermint and dandelion, which can cause side effects

Listeriosis

- Avoid ready-to-eat smoked or cured fish products, such as smoked salmon or gravlax, due to the risk of listeriosis.
- Listeriosis is an infection caused by bacteria called Listeria. People with kidney disease are at higher risk of serious illness from this infection.
- More information on how to reduce the risk of Listeriosis is available at: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/listeriosis/ and www.food.gov.uk/listeria.

5. Fluid

After your transplant, you will be advised on how much fluid to drink each day. This will depend on how much urine you are passing.

Sometimes the recommended amount of fluid can be high, which may be challenging, especially if you were previously on a fluid restriction.

If you are finding it difficult to manage your fluid intake, speak to your transplant nurse or dietitian for advice.

Further reviews by the kidney dietitian

Please contact us directly, or through a member of the transplant team, if you have any questions about your diet after your transplant. We can provide support with:

- Eating well in the first 0-3 months after your transplant, or advice on gaining weight.
- Information and support for people diagnosed with diabetes.
- Longer-term advice on a weight-reducing diet and help with achieving weight loss goals.
- Advice on a cholesterol lowering diet.

You can contact us on 024 7696 6151 or via X (previously known as Twitter) @UHCW_KidneyDiet.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us on 024 7696 6151 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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