



Preparing for Your Kidney Transplant

Eating well is important as you learn about your options for a kidney transplant and while you are on the waiting list for a new kidney.

A kidney transplant may help you:

- Improve your quality of life
- Eat a less strict diet
- Have improved overall survival

All surgeries have risks. Your transplant team will want you to be as healthy as you can to get a new kidney safely. This includes good nutrition!

Before transplant, your diet may vary based on your stage of kidney disease, blood test results, and preferences.

This handout covers four topics to help you be ready for a transplant.

1 Watch Your Weight

Aim for a healthy weight. Being too thin or obese increases your risks from surgery.

- Body mass index (BMI) measures weight compared to height. It does not assess lean body mass or body fat.
- Your waist circumference may also be measured. Excess belly fat may increase the risks of surgery and chronic diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure.

2 Be Active

Being physically active may help you manage your weight. Find activities you can do and enjoy. You don't have to run or go to a gym. If you have concerns about being able to exercise, check with your doctor.

- Be creative! Walk with a friend at work, do chair exercises while you watch TV, or have a dance party after dinner.
- Start slowly and increase little by little.
- Add movement when you can. Walk around for ten extra minutes at the store. Park further from the entrance to get extra steps.
- Work up to 30 minutes of exercise on most days. Aim for 150 minutes per week.



3 Make Healthy Eating a Habit

Weight gain after a transplant is common. This may be due to a less strict diet and increased appetite. Medications can also cause weight gain. Creating healthy habits before your transplant makes it easier to manage your weight after the transplant.

- Eat regular, balanced meals throughout the day. Skipping meals may cause you to eat more later in the day.
- Listen to your body and eat mindfully. Eat until you feel satisfied but not too full. Save leftovers for the next day.
- Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins (e.g., skinless chicken, turkey, fish or seafood, eggs, tofu, nuts, beans, and non- or low-fat dairy products).
- Cook at home. This helps control portions and ingredients. Plus, it saves money!
- Limit drinks with added sugar (e.g., soda, juice, sports drinks, flavored coffees).
- Bake, roast, steam, and grill instead of frying. Choose heart-healthy fats (e.g., canola and olive oil). Limit saturated and trans fats.
- Get enough sleep. Lack of sleep can affect hormones and make you feel more hungry.

Your Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) will help you create a healthy eating plan that works for you!

4 Manage Blood Sugar

If you have diabetes, managing your blood sugar is important both before and after a transplant.

If you do not have diabetes, there is an increased risk of developing diabetes after a transplant. Drugs used to prevent rejection of your new kidney can raise blood sugar.

Eating a healthy diet can help keep your blood sugar in a healthy range!

Nutrition tips to manage blood sugar:

- Use the “Plate Method”
 - Fill ½ your plate with non-starchy vegetables
 - Fill ¼ with carbohydrate choices: Fruit, starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn, peas), rice, pasta, bread
 - Fill ¼ with protein: Lean meat, poultry, seafood, beans, nuts, etc.
- Eat at regular times to avoid high or low blood sugars. Try to eat the same amount of carbs at each meal.
- Increase your fiber intake with whole grains, fruits and veggies, nuts or seeds, and beans.
- Limit sweets such as cookies, cakes, pies, and candy.
- Choose low-calorie drinks such as water, sparkling water, and unsweetened tea. Avoid drinks with added sugar or high fructose corn syrup.

Key Points

- ▶ **Good nutrition is vital for transplant success.**
- ▶ **To stay healthy before and after a transplant, watch your weight, eat a wholesome diet, and be active.**
- ▶ **Creating healthy habits before a transplant can help you stick with them after your transplant.**

I plan to:
