The first 2 months after transplant

Your body needs nutrition, especially protein, to promote healing, fight infection and build muscle. The carbohydrates and fat you eat give you energy to return to your normal activities.

You may not feel hungry or foods may taste different while you are taking large amounts of medicine. You still need to eat even if you have less of an appetite. Do not skip meals as this may slow your recovery.

Eat smaller, high nutrient snacks every couple hours instead of 3 meals each day if you do not feel hungry or have much of an appetite. Choose nutrient dense foods, such as high protein foods. Protein is one of the most important foods for your healing body. Choose a protein food each time you eat. High protein foods include:

- Lean meats, like beef, pork and poultry.
- Fish and seafood.
- Peanuts, nuts and nut butters.
- Dairy products, like milk cheese, yogurt and cottage cheese. Choose lactose-free if you are lactose intolerant.
- Beans, peas and tofu.
- Eggs.

Your doctor or dietitian may also order a nutritional supplement rich in protein and other nutrients.

Avoid caffeine for 2 weeks and avoid alcohol. Caffeine is a stimulant and raises blood pressure, putting stress on your body after a transplant. Alcohol should be avoided after transplant. Alcohol can increase triglycerides in the blood and impair liver function. It can also interact with transplant medicines.

- After 2 weeks, limit caffeine in the diet to no more than 1 serving a day for women or 2 servings a day for men. One beverage serving equals 8 ounces.
- Talk with your Transplant Doctor about alcohol use.

Taking care of your health

As you continue to heal, more changes will be needed in your diet to keep your transplanted organ healthy. If you have questions or concerns, please talk with your doctor or dietitian.

1. Drink 3 liters (96 ounces or twelve, 8-ounce cups) of fluid each day unless you have been instructed by your Transplant Care Team to follow a different limit. Fluids are needed to prevent dehydration and to keep your body and especially your transplanted organ working well. Dehydration is also called fluid loss.
2. **Follow food safety guidelines and avoid foods and drinks that may put you at risk for infection.** What may be safe to eat for the healthy person can be a risk for a person that takes anti-rejection medicines. Use the general guidelines on the next page to prevent infection from the foods you eat. For more information, read the handout, *Immunocompromised Diet Guidelines*.

- **Dairy products** – Avoid drinking or eating food made with unpasteurized milk. Avoid soft cheeses like feta, Brie, Camembert or any cheese made with unpasteurized milk.

- **Eggs** – Eat eggs that are fully cooked. Avoid raw or undercooked eggs and foods that may contain raw or undercooked eggs, such as cake batter, cookie dough, Caesar salad dressing, mayonnaise and hollandaise sauce.

- **Meat and poultry** – All meat and poultry should be cooked, so the juices run clear. Avoid rare meats and pink animal meat.

- **Seafood** – Avoid all raw or undercooked oysters, clams or mussels. Make sure shellfish is well cooked and firm.

- **Fruits and vegetables** – Use a scrub brush to wash fruits and vegetables, even when you are not going to eat the peel or they are prepackaged. Avoid salad bars. **Do not drink unpasteurized** fruit or vegetable juices or cider.

- **Keep food prep areas clean and keep cooked and raw foods separate.** Clean cutting boards between cutting meats and vegetables. Be sure to clean counter surfaces well.

- **When dining out, order meat, seafood and poultry cooked well done.**

3. **If you have nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, drink clear liquids and follow the BRAT diet for 8 to 12 hours.**

   - Clear liquids include water, lemon-lime soda and fruit juices that have no pulp like apple, grape and cranberry.

   - **The BRAT diet includes bananas, rice, applesauce and dry toast.** These bland foods can help you ease back into your normal diet. Do not add dairy products, sugary or fatty foods right away until you are sure the vomiting and diarrhea has stopped.

4. **Maintain a healthy weight.**

   To avoid weight gain:
   
   - Get moving. Be as active as you can be.
   - Eat smaller portions and avoid second helpings.
   - Limit the amount of added fats eaten.
   - Trim fat and skin from meats before cooking.
   - Avoid high fat gravies and sauces.
   - Avoid fried foods.
   - Avoid cakes, cookies, sugary beverages and other sweets that are high in calories and low in nutrition.
   - Choose high quality snacks, such as fresh fruits and vegetables and popcorn.
   - Bake, broil, grill, poach, boil or microwave foods.

5. **Limit sodium or salt.**

   Avoid food and drinks with a lot of salt. A low sodium diet is healthy for everyone. Many medicines needed for transplant health may cause fluid retention. Large amounts of salt in your body can make you retain fluids as well. Too much fluid in the body can lead to transplant problems. Choose as many fresh, unprocessed foods as possible. Look for
no salt or low salt products. **Avoid salt substitute products as most contain potassium.** Spices and herbs can be used as alternatives to salt.

**AVOID these foods that are high in sodium:**
- Processed meats, like lunch meat, bacon and some cheeses.
- Canned foods, like soups, vegetables and sauces.
- Fast food and pre-packaged convenience foods, like macaroni and cheese.
- Chips and crackers with added salt.
- Foods with added sauces.

Ask your dietitian for more information about eating a low sodium diet.

6. **Reduce and prevent high cholesterol.**
   Transplant patients are at risk for heart disease. One reason is the weight gain that some patients experience. Some transplant medicines can also raise cholesterol levels.
   - Limit egg yolks to 4 per week or use an egg substitute.
   - Use nonfat or low fat dairy products.
   - Trim fat from meat. Avoid processed meats, like sausage, hot dogs and bacon. Remove skin from poultry.
   - Eat fish and seafood.
   - Avoid fried foods.
   - Avoid butter, lard, shortening, ice cream and other sweets.
   - Use moderate amounts of monounsaturated (olive, canola or peanut oil) or polyunsaturated (safflower, corn or sunflower oil) fats.
   - Increase fiber in your diet. Fiber can help lower cholesterol levels. Choose whole fruits and vegetables and 100% whole grain breads, pastas and oats.

7. **Avoid grapefruit and pomegranate.**
   These fruits or products that contain them affect how some transplant medicines are absorbed in the body. **Read blended juice labels to check for these ingredients.**

8. **Watch your potassium levels.**
   After a transplant, keep track of your potassium levels. Some medicines can make your body hold onto potassium. Other medicines, such as diuretics to lose water weight, can make your body lose potassium.
   **If your potassium is too low,** eat more high potassium foods, such as:
   - Bananas.
   - Cantaloupes, honeydew melons.
   - Dried beans and peas.
   - Oranges and orange juice.
   - Potatoes, both white and sweet.
   - Prunes, prune juice.
   - Raw broccoli, spinach.
   - Tomatoes and tomato products, low sodium V-8 juice.

   **If your potassium is too high,** eat less high potassium foods.

9. **Prevent bone disease.**
   Calcium is a mineral that makes your bones and teeth strong. Steroids make it hard to absorb calcium. If you have low calcium levels, this may lead to fractures.
   - Eat foods high in calcium. Three, 8-ounce glasses of low-fat milk provide most of the calcium you need each day. If you do not drink milk or eat dairy products, ask your doctor about taking a calcium supplement.
   - Vitamin D is also needed, so your body can use the calcium you eat to build strong bones. Ask your doctor if you need to take a supplement.
   - Weight bearing exercise, such as walking, can also prevent bone disease.
10. **Talk to your doctor or dietitian about taking a multivitamin and avoid herbal supplements.**

   Many vitamins and minerals work together to keep your body healthy. Depending on your health and nutrition needs, you may need more than a multivitamin for your health.

   When taking a multivitamin, read the label to see if it fits your nutrition plan. The vitamin should not provide more than 200% of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA). If you take a multivitamin, be sure to take one for your age and gender.

---

**For more information**