

Focus On Diet

Living Healthy. Living Well.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How does food affect my dialysis?
- What do I need to know about fluids?
- What do I need to know about potassium?
- What do I need to know about phosphorus?
- What do I need to know about protein?
- What do I need to know about sodium?
- What do I need to know about calories?
- Should I take vitamins and minerals?

If you are not sure or do not know all the answers to these questions,

READ ON!

When you start on hemodialysis, you must make changes in your life. Watching the foods you eat will make you healthier.

Hemodialysis removes wastes from your blood. But between sessions, wastes can build up in your blood and make you sick. You can reduce the amount of wastes by watching what you eat and drink.

A good meal plan can improve your dialysis and your health.

Your dialysis clinic has a dietitian to help you plan meals. The dietitian in your dialysis clinic is specially trained to manage the diet needs of people with kidney failure.

Fluids:

- You already know you need to watch how much you drink. Any food that is liquid at room temperature also contains water. These foods include soup, Jell-O, and ice cream.
- Many fruits and vegetables contain lots of water, too.
- Fluid can build up between dialysis sessions, causing swelling and weight gain. The extra fluid affects your blood pressure and can make your heart work harder. You could get serious heart trouble from overloading your system with fluid.

**For more on fluid management for dialysis patients, see Focus on Fluids handout.*

Potassium:

- Potassium is a mineral found in many foods, especially milk, fruits, and vegetables.
- Potassium affects how steadily your heart beats.
- Healthy kidneys keep the right amount of potassium in the blood to keep the heart beating at a steady pace. Potassium levels can rise between dialysis sessions and affect your heartbeat. Eating too much potassium can be very dangerous to your heart. It may even cause death.

- To control potassium levels in your blood, avoid foods that are very high in potassium. Eat smaller portions of high-potassium foods.
- You can remove some of the potassium from potatoes and other vegetables by peeling them, then soaking them in a large amount of water for several hours. Drain and rinse before cooking.

| HIGH POTASSIUM FOODS | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------|--------------|---------------|----------|
| apricots | brussel sprouts | figs | milk | peanuts | raisins |
| avocados | cantaloupe | kiwi fruit | nectarines | pears (fresh) | sardines |
| bananas | clams | lima beans | orange juice | potatoes | spinach |
| beets | dates | melons | oranges | prunes | tomatoes |

Talk to your dietician about foods you can eat instead of high potassium foods

Phosphorus:

- Phosphorus is a mineral found in many foods.
- Normal kidneys excrete excess amounts of phosphorus filtered from our blood.
- When kidneys stop functioning normally, phosphorus can build-up in our blood from the foods we eat.
- If you have too much phosphorus in your blood, it pulls calcium from your bones.
- Losing calcium will make your bones weak and likely to break.
- Too much phosphorus will make your skin itch.
- You probably will need to take a phosphorus binder such as Phoslo, Renvela or TUMS to control the phosphorus in your blood between dialysis sessions. These medications act like sponges to soak up, or bind, phosphorus while it is in the stomach. Because it is bound, the phosphorus does not get into the blood. Instead, it is passed out of the body in the stool.

| HIGH PHOSPHORUS FOODS | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------------|------|-------|------|---------------|
| Milk | Cheese | Dried beans | Peas | Colas | Nuts | Peanut butter |

Talk to your dietician about foods you can eat instead of high phosphorus foods

Protein:

- Most people on dialysis are encouraged to eat as much high-quality protein as they can. The better nourished you are, the healthier you will be.
- Protein helps you keep muscle and repair tissue.
- In your body, protein breaks down into a waste product called urea. If urea builds up in your body, you can become very sick. Some sources of protein produce less waste than others. These are called high-quality proteins.
- Getting most of your protein from high-quality sources can reduce the amount of urea in your blood.

| HIGH-QUALITY PROTEIN FOODS | | | |
|----------------------------|---|------|--|
| Meat | - | Fish | - Poultry - Eggs (especially egg whites) |

Talk to dietician about good sources of protein you can eat.

Sodium:

- Sodium is found in salt and other foods. Most canned foods and frozen dinners contain large amounts of sodium.
- Too much sodium makes you thirsty. But, if you drink more fluid, your heart has to work harder to pump the fluid through your body. Over time, this can cause high blood pressure and congestive heart failure.
- Try to eat fresh foods that are naturally low in sodium. Look for products labeled low sodium.
- Do not use salt substitutes because they contain potassium. Talk to the dietician about spices you can use to flavor your food. The dietician can help you find spice blends without sodium and potassium.

Calories:

- Calories provide energy for your body.
- If your doctor recommends it, you may need to cut down on the calories you eat.
- Some people on dialysis may need to gain weight. You may need to find ways to add calories to your diet.
- Talk to your dietitian about your calorie intake and whether you should add or take away calories from your diet.
- A dietitian's guidance is very important for people on dialysis, especially if they have diabetes.

Vitamins and Minerals:

- Vitamins and minerals may be missing from your diet because you have to avoid so many foods.
- Your doctor may prescribe a vitamin and mineral supplement like Nephrocaps or Nephrovite.
- NEVER take vitamins that you can buy off the store shelf. They may contain vitamins or minerals that are harmful to patients with kidney failure.

Please take a moment to answer these True/False questions with your Primary Nurse.

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| 1. Fluids only come from what we drink, not from what we eat. | True | False |
| 2. Eating too many foods high in potassium could cause your heart to stop beating. | True | False |
| 3. Phosphorus binders help rid your body of excess phosphorus. | True | False |
| 4. Avoiding foods high in phosphorus may help improve itchy skin. | True | False |
| 5. The higher your sodium intake, the higher your fluid gains will be between dialysis treatments. | True | False |
| 6. Excessive fluid gains does not affect your heart. | True | False |
| 7. Centrum or One-A-Day Vitamins are O.K. for dialysis patients to take. | True | False |
| 8. If you have questions about your diet, you see the dietitian in the dialysis unit. | True | False |