

## Kidney Disease: Healthy eating for your kidneys

*This dietary advice sheet provides general information to help you change your diet. If you want more detailed advice or are following other dietary restrictions and need guidance, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.*

One function of the kidneys is to filter waste products (from the digestion of food and drinks and other processes) from the body and remove them in the urine. When your kidneys are not working properly, these waste products are not removed in your urine and can build up to harmful levels in your blood. This can make you feel unwell with symptoms such as tiredness, nausea, loss of appetite and itching. It is also important for your overall health and well-being to eat well and to remain as active as possible. This advice sheet explains how altering your diet can help to minimise the build-up of waste products, help to keep your kidneys working as well as possible, and keep you feeling as well as possible.

### **Tips for eating well:**

1. Eat less salt
2. Drink plenty of fluid
3. Eat regular meals & base your meals around starchy foods (e.g. bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes, pasta or rice)
4. Include protein at each meal
5. Choose healthy fats
6. Include some fruit, vegetables or salad every day
7. Aim to be a healthy weight and to be as active as possible
8. Only restrict your potassium or phosphate intake if advised by a doctor, nurse or dietitian
9. Enjoy your food!

### **1. Salt**

Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure, which can damage your kidneys.

The majority of salt in our diets is hidden in the foods we eat, particularly processed and convenience foods. Salt also comes from salt added in cooking (including stock cubes/powders and sauces) and salt added to our food at the table.

#### **Ways to reduce your salt (also called sodium chloride) intake:**

- Use very little salt in cooking, or none at all
- Avoid adding salt to food at the table – this includes all types of salt such as table salt, sea salt, rock salt, celery salt and garlic salt
- Avoid salt substitutes such as Bio-Salt and LoSalt and any products containing these
- Use flavourings such as garlic, herbs, lemon/lime juice, pepper and spices to add extra flavour
- Try to avoid processed and convenience foods, cook from fresh as much as possible
- Choose foods with less than 0.5g sodium (less than 1.25g salt) per 100g (to convert salt to sodium – divide by 2.5).

### **2. Fluid**

At this stage of kidney disease, there is usually no need to reduce your fluid intake. Aim for about 2 litres (4 pints) fluid per day (unless you have been specifically advised to reduce your fluid by your doctor, nurse or dietitian). Include a variety of fluids (unless you are following a potassium or phosphate restriction in which case you will be advised on suitable drink options).

**3. Eat regular meals & base your meals around starchy foods** (e.g. bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes, pasta or rice). It is important to eat at regular times and at least three times a day to have a good appetite and healthy digestion. Starchy foods are important in the diet for the vitamins, minerals and fibre they contain, so try to include these at every meal. Wholegrain varieties eg brown rice or pasta, wholegrain bread and cereals are especially helpful in preventing constipation. If you have diabetes it is important to eat regular, high fibre, low sugar meals to control your blood sugar.

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### **4. Include protein at each meal**

Protein is an important nutrient for health. It is found in foods such as meat, fish, milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs, nuts, beans and pulses. It is needed for many functions in the body including growth, repair and development of muscle and body tissue. Try to include some protein in at least two meals each day but avoid very large portions such as very large steaks or half a chicken.

### **5. Choose healthy fats**

All fats contain a lot of calories. If you are underweight or struggling with poor appetite, fat can help to add energy to your diet. If you need to lose weight, reducing your fat intake can help. As well as reducing total fat it is important for your heart, kidneys and brain that you choose healthier fats:

**Choose monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats.** These do not raise your cholesterol levels and provide essential fatty acids. Examples include: Olive, rapeseed, soya, sunflower and corn oils. Nuts, seeds and oily fish are also healthy choices.

**Reduce saturated and trans fats.** These can raise cholesterol and cause blocked blood vessels. Examples of saturated fats include: fatty meat, butter, lard, ghee, palm and coconut oil, cream, hard cheese, and foods containing these products. Most trans fats are produced during the processing of foods. They are similar to saturated fats in the effect they have on our bodies. Examples of foods that may contain trans fats include: biscuits, cakes, pastries and pies, some spreads and spreadable butter, pizza and dairy ice cream,

#### ***Tips to reduce your saturated and trans fat\* intake***

- Buy lean meats and reduce fatty processed meats (e.g. sausages, streaky bacon). Remove skin and visible fat from meat before cooking.
- Reduce high fat snacks such as biscuits, cakes, pastries and pies
- Avoid butter, lard or ghee for cooking, use one of the monounsaturated/polyunsaturated oils instead.

\*check the nutritional information on food labels- trans fats may be listed in the ingredients as 'hydrogenated' or 'partially hydrogenated fat/oil'.

### **6. Include some fruit, vegetables or salad every day**

These are important as a source of vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and fibre which are important in your diet to keep you healthy and reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia and cancer. Even if you need to follow a potassium restriction you should aim to include two portions of fruit and two portions of vegetables a day

### **7. Aim to be a healthy weight and to be as active as possible**

Keeping your weight at the right level for your height can help you to be active and to enjoy a good quality of life. If you need advice because you have a poor appetite and have lost weight, or you are gaining weight and are less mobile than you were, or you are diabetic and it is affecting your blood sugar control, ask the dietitian for more advice.

### **8. Only restrict your Potassium or Phosphate intake if advised by a doctor, nurse or dietitian**

Potassium and phosphate are minerals found in the blood and affected by our diets. They are important for heart and bone health and can be increased if your kidneys are not working properly. There is no need to restrict potassium and phosphate unless you have been advised to do so. If you have been advised to follow a restriction please see our '*Controlling your Potassium*' and '*Controlling your Phosphate*' or '*Controlling your Potassium and Phosphate*' leaflets for more information.

### **9. Enjoy your Food**

It is important that you continue to enjoy eating, including eating out and with friends and family. If you are struggling with your diet in any way and need more guidance, ask to be referred to a dietitian.