

# Healthy eating after a kidney transplant

## Overview

This leaflet has an overview of this topic.

Go to [www.infoKID.org.uk](http://www.infoKID.org.uk) to find out more about this topic,  
or to find other topics for parents and carers about children's kidney conditions.

This information is about healthy eating after a kidney transplant.  
It covers:

- eating a healthy, balanced diet, rich in fruit and vegetables
- eating less fat and choosing healthier types of fat
- limiting the amount of salt and sugar
- getting lots of exercise

This advice is very important to help your child have a healthy body weight. This will reduce the risk of heart disease and other health problems later in life.



## Diet after a kidney transplant

Before a kidney transplant, many children have restrictions on what they can eat and drink – for example, much less of the minerals potassium and phosphate, which are found in many foods.

After a **kidney transplant**, most children can eat a diet that is much less restrictive and more varied. Your renal team will advise you on what your child can eat.

### Appetite

Some children with kidney disease have a poor appetite, and do not want to eat. This usually improves after a kidney transplant.

However, if your child eats too much food or a lot of unhealthy food, he or she may have higher amounts of fat and sugar in the blood over the long term.

### Medicines

Your child may also feel more hungry than usual if he or she is taking **steroid** medicines, especially for the first few months when the dose (amount of medicine) is high. When the dose is reduced, this effect on appetite is reduced.

Steroids can also lead to more of the mineral calcium being lost from your child's bones.

### Tips

If your child is gaining too much weight, and you think that he or she may be eating too much food or unhealthy food, try the following.

- Make sure your child has regular meals – skipping meals may make them eat more later on.
- If your child wants a snack, try fruit, vegetable sticks or crispbreads, crackerbreads or rice cakes with a low-fat topping. He or she may also try sugar-free jellies, ice lollies or toast with low-fat toppings.
- Your child may have a glass of water or a low-calorie and low-sugar drink such as juice with their snack, to help fill him or her up.
- Your child can have larger portions of rice, vegetables, pasta or potatoes with his or her meals, but do not add extra sauces or butter.

## A balanced diet

You can help prevent excessive weight gain after a transplant by making sure your child eats a healthy, balanced diet, which includes:

- fruit and vegetables – at least five servings a day
- starchy foods, such as bread, rice, potatoes and pasta – use wholegrain varieties where possible
- protein – including healthy types of meat, fish, eggs, beans and dairy produce, and other sources of protein such as soy products

## Fat, sugar and salt

It is important that your child has only a small amount of foods are high in fat (especially saturated fat), sugar and/or salt.

## Exercise

Exercise is a very important part of staying healthy.

When your child first comes out of the hospital after a kidney transplant, he or she will only be able to gently exercise at first. After about three months, your child will be able to return to his or her normal activities. Your child's doctor and community nurse will speak with you about what is right for your child to do and when.

Your child can get regular exercise every day. Your doctor or nurse will let you know whether there are any activities your child should avoid. Some options are:

- walking to nursery, school or college
- playing a sport
- dancing
- swimming

## Safer eating

Because of medicines taken after a kidney transplant, your child has a greater risk of getting ill from germs, such as bacteria. You will have been advised on this during your child's hospital stay for the transplantation.

Some bacterial infections can be picked up from food. You can help reduce your child's risk of infection from food by:

- handling food safely
- being careful when eating out or getting takeaway foods
- avoiding certain 'high-risk' foods because they are more likely to have bacteria that can cause an infection

» **More about healthy eating after a kidney transplant on [www.infoKID.org.uk](http://www.infoKID.org.uk)**

### Special acknowledgement:

This information was co-written with Sarah Trace, Paediatric Dietitian Royal Hospital for Children, Bristol.

[www.infoKID.org.uk](http://www.infoKID.org.uk)



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For details on any sources of information used in this topic, please contact us through our website, [www.infoKID.org.uk](http://www.infoKID.org.uk).

We take great care to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct and up-to-date. However, it is important that you ask the advice of your child's doctor or nurse if you are not sure about something. This information is intended for use in the United Kingdom, and may not apply to other countries.

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