

Healthy eating after your liver transplant

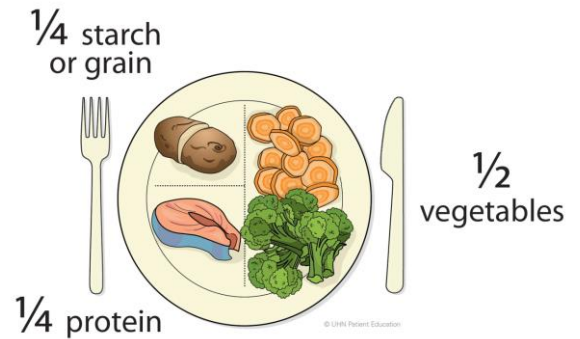
Nutrition plays an important role in your recovery after transplant and in your long-term health. Remember: Everyone is different! Your nutrition needs may change if you have complications or side effects from your medications after transplant.

Here are some healthy eating tips to think about after your liver transplant:

1-2 months after your transplant

After your liver transplant, you need enough calories, protein, vitamins and minerals to help heal your wounds and re-build any muscle you may have lost.

Use this plate model as a guide to eat a balance of nutrients at every meal.



Protein

Protein is a very important part of your diet during your recovery.

Good sources of protein include:

- Fish
- Poultry (chicken, turkey)
- Lean meat (beef, pork, lamb)
- Eggs
- Legumes or lentils (kidney beans, chickpeas, black beans, navy beans, etc.)
- Dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese)
- Soy products (tofu, soy milk, soybeans)
- Nuts, seeds and nut butters (peanut butter, almond butter, etc.)

You should have at least one of these protein foods in each meal.

Long-term eating: Taking care of your health

Once you have recovered from your transplant surgery, it is important to eat well to keep your new organ healthy and manage the longer-term side effects of your medications.

Transplant medications can increase your chance of developing obesity, heart disease, diabetes, bone loss, and high levels of potassium in your blood. Diet changes can help manage these issues.

Weight gain

After your transplant, you may experience a few things that can cause you to gain weight:

- You may have a stronger appetite because of prednisone, a medication used after transplant
- You may enjoy food more when you are feeling better and start eating more
- Your body may not be working as hard (using as much energy) once your new organ is functioning well
- You may not be able to be physically active right away



To help prevent too much weight gain, here are some tips to follow:

1. Limit foods that are high in fat and calories
2. Include more high-fibre foods such as:
 - vegetables
 - legumes (black beans, kidney beans, lentils),
 - whole grains (100% whole wheat bread, pasta, cereal)
 - whole fruits
3. Include a good source of protein at each meal such as:
 - a palm-sized portion of chicken, lean meat, fish or legumes
 - low-fat dairy foods (milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, cheese)
 - eggs
4. Include exercise in your daily schedule.
Talk to your transplant team about what is safe for you.

High cholesterol levels

High blood cholesterol levels can increase the chance of heart disease. Some transplant medications can raise your cholesterol levels.

You can help manage your blood cholesterol levels by making diet changes such as:

- Choosing healthy fats more often such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, found mainly in vegetable oils, nuts and fish.
- Having more fibre in your diet by choosing whole grain products, whole fruits and vegetables, and legumes.
- Keeping your weight in a healthy range.
- Visit the Eat Right Ontario Facts on cholesterol website for more information.
<https://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Heart-Health/Facts-on-Cholesterol.aspx>

High blood sugar

Prednisone is a steroid medication used after transplant. It may cause high blood sugar levels.

You can help manage this side effect by limiting foods that are concentrated sources of carbohydrates (sugar) and following a balanced eating pattern.

Limit sugars and sweets such as:

- Sugar (brown, white, cane, etc.)
- Regular pop, fruit juice
- Desserts, biscuits, cakes, pastries
- Candy, chocolate
- Jam, honey

If you do develop high blood sugar or diabetes, a Registered Dietitian can work with you to help make diet changes.

The Canadian Diabetes Association can help you learn more about portion control, meal planning, fats, and other facts about nutrition and blood sugars: Visit

<https://www.diabetes.ca/diabetes-and-you/healthy-living-resources/diet-nutrition>

Bone loss

Being on prednisone after transplant can also put you at risk for bone loss (osteoporosis) and fractures (broken bones).

To help prevent this, make sure you get enough calcium and vitamin D each day. Resources from Osteoporosis Canada can help you maintain healthy bones.

<http://www.osteoporosis.ca/osteoporosis-and-you/nutrition/>

High potassium in your blood

Some transplant medications can increase the level of potassium in your blood. This is a serious condition.

If you have been told to avoid foods high in potassium, these are some of the **foods to avoid**:

Foods that are high in potassium

Fruits	Vegetables	Other foods and beverages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">BananaNectarineKiwifruitPrune juiceOranges and Orange JuiceDried fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sweet potatoPotatoChardSpinachTomato and Tomato products (juice, paste, sauce)Avocado	<ul style="list-style-type: none">100% Bran cerealsChocolate milk, Plain milkYogurtLegumes (beans and lentils)Nuts and seedsChocolateSome nutritional supplements (e.g. Ensure™, Boost™, etc.)

These are general guidelines and do not include all food sources of potassium. If you are having trouble managing your potassium level, a Registered Dietitian can go over your diet with you.

Your safety

Some other important issues to consider as a transplant patient include food safety and natural health products and supplements.

Food safety

Some of your transplant medications are immunosuppressants or medications that lower the activity of your immune system to prevent your body from rejecting your transplanted organ.

When your immune system is weakened, it is harder for your body to fight disease. You have a higher chance of getting food poisoning that may lead to some serious effects on your health.

It is very important that you are careful about what you eat and how you store, prepare and cook your food. This guide offers helpful advice on how to reduce your risk of food poisoning: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/alt/pdf/eating-nutrition/safety-salubrite/immune-immunitaire-eng.pdf>

Supplements

The UHN Multi Organ Transplant Program recommends that you **DO NOT** use herbal and natural health products after transplant or while on the waiting list for your transplant.

This brochure explains why:

http://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Using_Herbal_Natural_Health_Products_Transplant.pdf

How can I get more information or ask questions about healthy eating after my liver transplant?

If you have questions or need more information about a healthy eating plan after your liver transplant, ask your transplant team if you can talk with a Registered Dietitian.

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