



Nutrition and Liver Transplant

It is important to eat a healthy diet after transplant. Good nutrition is important for you and for the health of your newly transplanted liver. Healthy food choices can help you:

1. Maintain normal blood sugar, helping to prevent diabetes.
2. Maintain a healthy weight.
3. Maintain normal blood pressure through salt control.
4. Keep blood fats like cholesterol in normal range.

CALORIES

Carbohydrates, proteins and fats provide calories. Eat enough calories to maintain a healthy weight. Excess calories will lead to weight gain. **Healthy food choices** will help you maintain a **healthy weight**. Limit high calorie, fatty foods and sugars.

CARBOHYDRATES AND BLOOD SUGAR

Some of the medications you must take to prevent rejection of your newly transplanted liver can lead to high blood sugars. Your blood sugar might be high even if you have never been a diabetic. The transplant team might instruct you to check your blood sugar at home. Juice, soda, desserts and candy can raise your blood sugar. Carbohydrates (carbs) in foods like bread, pasta, rice and potato, also turn into “sugar” in the blood. The healthiest carbs are whole grains like whole wheat bread, whole grain cereals, whole-wheat pasta and brown rice.

Clinical Nutrition Support Services
Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania

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PROTEIN

You need more protein to help with healing after transplant surgery. Healing usually takes between 6-8 weeks. Good sources of protein include fish, poultry, egg whites, egg substitutes, lean meat, and low fat dairy (milk, yogurt and cottage cheese). If your appetite is poor, we may recommend a supplement like Glucerna® or Ensure Plus®. To insure you are eating enough protein, include a protein food at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Milk on cereal at breakfast, tuna salad sandwich at lunch, grilled chicken breast at dinner and a yogurt at bedtime are examples of how to achieve this goal. Once you have healed, you should resume a more moderate protein.

FATS

Fats provide more than double the calories of protein and carbs. Choose lean proteins like fish and poultry. Purchase lean meats and trim the visible fat. Choose reduced or no fat milk and yogurt. Limit added fats, like butter and sour cream on baked potatoes. Limit fried foods, instead broil, roast or grill. Store bought cookies, crackers and snack foods are usually high in fat. They often are a source of trans- fats. Trans- fats can increase your cholesterol. Use canola oil, olive oil and cooking sprays.

SODIUM

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend using less than 2300 milligrams of sodium per day. Seventy-five percent of our sodium intake comes from processed convenience and prepared foods. Canned soups, deli meats and cheeses, and many snack foods like chips and crackers are usually high in sodium. Remember that sea salt has the same amount of salt as regular table salt. If you have any questions, ask the dietitian to review this diet with you. Restaurant foods contain lots of sodium. Order grilled, baked, or roasted, chicken, fish or lean meat. Ask that they be prepared without additional salt. Request that sauces be served on the side. Many restaurants have a web site where you can check sodium information before you go. Better yet, limit how often you eat out.

FLUID

Water and other no calorie beverages are the best choice. Too much juice and soda adds sugar calories.

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POTASSIUM

Certain immunosuppressant medications may cause elevated blood potassium. This is often temporary and may change with medication adjustments. If you need a low potassium diet, the dietitian will provide you with a list of foods to help guide your choices. High potassium foods include oranges, orange juice, banana, cantaloupe, honeydew, baked potato, yams, spinach, tomato sauce, spaghetti sauce and tomato juice. It is not mandatory to list potassium on the nutrition label. The absence of potassium on the label does not mean there is no potassium in the food.

A healthy diet along with a healthy life style will provide the best environment for your liver. Healthy lifestyle choices include physical activity. Try to include some form of physical activity every day. Walking is easy and free. Walk the dog. Walk with a friend. Walk whenever you can. Be certain to wear comfortable shoes and clothes. Health experts recommend that we take 10,000 steps a day. Other activities include biking, dancing, swimming etc. Just think about moving your body. Always check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

See www.choosemyplate.gov for further details on choosing a healthy diet.

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