Renal Diet – Not on Dialysis

When your kidneys are not working the way they should, it is called Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). There are 5 stages of kidney disease. Your meal plan will depend on the stage you are diagnosed with. Carefully choosing the foods you eat will make you healthier and keep your kidneys working well. Use this sheet to help you learn how to eat right to feel right. A Registered Dietitian can help you with this meal plan.

Record your Dietician's name and phone number.

HOW DOES FOOD AFFECT MY KIDNEYS?

Food gives you energy and helps your body repair itself. Food is broken down in your stomach and intestines. Your blood picks up nutrients from the digested food and carries them to all your body cells. These cells take nutrients from your blood and put waste products back into the bloodstream. When your kidneys were healthy, they worked around the clock to remove wastes from your blood. The wastes left your body when you urinated or when you had bowel movements.

Now that your kidneys cannot remove wastes from food, you will need to eat fewer foods that cause waste build-up in the body.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FLUIDS?

Most people with CKD do not need to restrict fluid. However, if you are retaining fluid in your legs, your doctor may recommend to restrict fluids.

Ask and record the amount of fluid you can have each day.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT POTASSIUM?

Potassium is a mineral found in many foods, especially milk, fruits, and vegetables. It 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. You may need to restrict potassium. Talk to your doctor or dietitian to learn more about your potassium needs.

If you do need to reduce the potassium in your diet, start by noting the high-potassium foods (below) that you now eat. A dietitian can help you add other foods to the list. See the Potassium Content of Foods handout for more detailed information.

High-Potassium Foods:

- Apricots.
- Brussel sprouts.
- Dates.
- Lima beans.
- Oranges.
- Prune juice.
- Spinach.
- Avocados.
- Milk.
- Figs.
- Melons.
- Peanuts.
- Prunes.
- Tomatoes.
- Bananas.
- Cantaloupe.
- Kiwi fruit.
- Nectarines.
- Asparagus spears.
- Raisins.
- Winter squash.
- Beets.
- Clams.
- Fruit.
- Orange juice.
- Potatoes.
- Sardines.
- Yogurt.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PHOSPHORUS?

- Phosphorus is a mineral found in many foods. 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. Also, too much phosphorus may make your skin itch. Avoid foods like milk and cheese, dried beans, peas, colas, nuts, and peanut butter which are high in phosphorus.
- Your needs will depend on your kidney’s ability to use phosphorous.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PROTEIN?

- It is important to follow a low-protein diet. A lower protein diet will slow the rate of your kidney failure.
- Protein helps you keep muscle and repair tissue. In your body, the protein you eat breaks down into a waste product called urea. If urea builds up in your blood, you can become very sick. Some sources of protein produce less waste than others. These are called high-quality proteins. High-quality proteins come from meat, fish, poultry, and eggs.

Ask and record how many servings of meat you may eat per day. A regular serving size is about the size of the palm of your hand or a deck of cards.

- Try to choose lean (low-fat) meats that are also low in phosphorus. If you are a vegetarian, ask about other ways to get your protein.
- Low-fat milk is a good source of protein. But milk is high in phosphorus and potassium. Talk to a dietitian to see if milk fits into your food plan.

Ask and record whether you should or should not drink milk. If you should, record the amount.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SODIUM?

- Sodium is found in salt and other foods. Most canned foods and frozen dinners contain large amounts of sodium.
- 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 a dietitian about spices you can use to flavor your food. The dietitian can help you find spice blends without sodium or potassium.

SHOULD I TAKE VITAMINS AND MINERALS?

- Take only the vitamins your doctor prescribes.
- 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 to meet your special needs.

This information is compiled from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, The American Dietetic Association, and the National Institute of Health.

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