



Nutrition Tips

Eating During Hemodialysis

Plan for when to eat:

At least 2 hours before your dialysis treatment.

Eat a low fat, low fiber, high sugar/ starch meal before your treatments. See the back page for some great ideas.

Don't eat during dialysis. It can cause low blood pressure and increase your chances of choking.

Bring a snack for after your treatment to add extra calories and protein.

If you are concerned about low blood sugar, pack a wrapped snack like graham crackers to bring with you.

Don't eat food prepared by other patients. Store-bought items that have not been touched are fine.

Is your dietitian always saying, “eat more meat, eat more eggs, eat more food”? Is there a time when you shouldn't eat? Definitely! The worst time to eat is when you are doing your hemodialysis treatments.

A good time to eat is at least 2 hours before you come for your treatment. Pick foods that are easier to digest. Foods that are higher in fat stay in your stomach longer and are more likely to cause problems.

High starch or sugar meals leave your stomach sooner and are typically a better choice. Try to limit foods high in fiber as these also take longer to digest. People with diabetes tend to have a slower emptying time, so liquids might be a good option.

If you do get hungry during dialysis, bring a small snack about the size of 1 cup of food. This will satisfy your hunger until your next meal.

Ask your dietitian for ideas and plans that will work best for you. You can also check out the Northwest Kidney Center website at www.nwkidney.org for some great recipes.





Why shouldn't I eat during dialysis?

There are many reasons why it is not a good idea to eat during your treatments.

Low blood pressure: When you put food in your stomach blood rushes to surround the stomach and intestine, so it can do it's job of carrying digested nutrients (calories, protein, vitamins and minerals) to the rest of your body. We've known about this, since our mothers warned us about not to swim after eating to avoid muscle cramps. The same thing happens when you eat during dialysis. Blood from your muscles, arms, and legs rushes to your gut for digestion, potentially causing cramps, low blood pressure, nausea, and vomiting.

Danger of choking: We know most people on dialysis, especially those with diabetes, have reduced swallowing ability. Add this to eating while laying back in a chair, a dropping blood pressure, and you are setting yourself up for a dangerous and even life threatening choking experience.

It's not clean: Let's face it, a dialysis unit has lots of blood around. As hard as everyone tries to make it a clean and sanitary environment, it is not. Would you risk a chance of getting hepatitis, or other serious disease, because the bedside table where you laid your tuna fish sandwich wasn't cleaned well?

Here are some good ideas for "pre-dialysis" meals.

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Hard boiled egg	Grilled Chicken Breast	Pasta with red sauce
Hot or cold cereal	Lettuce salad	Garlic bread (use spray)
Toast with jam	Sliced Cucumber, Tomatoes	Asparagus
Milk	Bread Stick	Sherbet
Pancakes	Tuna fish sandwich	Steak Fajitas
Canned peaches	Bread roll	Onions, Peppers
Syrup	Apple	Avocado
Low sodium sausage		Chocolate Mousse
Scrambled Eggs	Cream of Corn Soup	Herb Topped Fish
English Muffin with jelly	Hamburger Patty and Bun	Rice Pilaf
Strawberries	Mustard, Lettuce, Tomato	Green beans
Milk	Fruit Cocktail	Dinner roll