

## **An introduction to Salt and Fluid**

### **Salt**

Too much salt can raise your blood pressure and make you thirsty. This makes it more difficult to control the amount you drink.

To reduce your salt intake:

- Try to reduce the amount of salt added to cooking and do not add any salt at the table. Use pepper, herbs and spices instead
- Most of the salt that we eat is from processed foods such as tinned, cured and smoked foods, ham, bacon, sausages, savoury snacks e.g. crisps and nuts, soups, sauces, gravies, ready meals and takeaways
- Try to choose 'lower salt' versions of these foods and to choose fresh, unprocessed food as much as possible
- Do not use salt substitutes such as LoSalt or So Lo as they contain potassium
- You should find that after a few weeks, your taste buds will become more sensitive to salt and you will start to enjoy less salty food

### **Fluid**

If your kidneys are unable to remove all the fluid that you drink, this can show as a rapid increase in weight, make you breathless and your ankles swell. However, if you drink less than you need, you may become dehydrated and feel dizzy. You will be advised how much fluid is right for you by your doctor or dialysis nurse.

If you are asked to limit the amount that you drink please ask to speak to the dietitian as they can help support you with this.

## **DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITION & DIETETICS**

## **DIET WHEN STARTING DIALYSIS**

This leaflet has been provided by your renal nurse, doctor or dietitian to give you an introduction to the link between diet and dialysis treatment. Diet is an important part of the treatment of kidney disease, but dietary advice is different for everyone, so you should not make any changes to your diet unless a dietitian, nurse, or doctor has advised you.

You will be referred to the Specialist Renal Dietitian for individualised advice and support.

RENAL DIETITIANS TELEPHONE: 01482 674707  
Please note: you can also leave a voicemail message

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## Diet when starting Dialysis

One of the roles of the kidneys is to clean the blood to remove waste products and extra water from foods and drink.

When the kidneys are not able to do this work, the waste products and excess fluid build-up. Dialysis takes over the work of the kidney by cleaning the blood. Following the right diet can help to reduce the amount of waste products that build up in the blood.

Your dialysis nurse will usually let you know your latest blood results. If you want further details, please ask your dietitian, specialist nurse or consultant about *PatientView*. This provides you with information online about your blood results, including potassium and phosphate.

Potassium and phosphate are salts that are measured in your blood tests.

If your blood potassium is too high or too low it can affect your heart.

If your blood phosphate is too high, this can lead to thinning of the bones, hardening of the arteries and bone or joint pain.

You may be referred to the dietitian by the medical or nursing staff if your blood potassium and/or your phosphate levels are too high or too low.

The dietitian can advise you on the best foods to choose to help to keep these levels well controlled, taking into account your food likes and dislikes.

Choosing the best foods can help you to feel better, both in the short term and in the future.

## When to see a dietitian

It is helpful if you can meet a dietitian within the first month of starting dialysis, so that you can discuss any dietary concerns you may have and to receive individualised advice.

The dietitian works closely with the doctors and nurses caring for you. The dietitian attends the regular multi professional dialysis meetings to discuss any dietary concerns.

Please do not hesitate to contact the dietitian by phone if you want to discuss any problems that you have with your food and drink at any time.

Below are some examples of how the dietitian may be able to help:

- If your appetite is poor or you are struggling to eat or if you are losing weight
- To provide you with advice to ensure you are eating enough protein, as this is especially important for people having dialysis
- If your blood potassium level is too high or too low
- If your blood phosphate level is too high or too low
- If you are gaining too much fluid weight between dialysis sessions, leading to 'fluid overload'
- If you have another health problem such as diabetes that you also need to manage
- To help you maintain a healthy weight or to lose weight; for example this may be needed if you are considering a kidney transplant
- To help you to have a well-balanced diet. Some vitamins are lost during dialysis and not all supplements are suitable for those on dialysis. The dietitian can advise on a suitable vitamin supplement.