Kidney Cancer & You

Lifestyle & Diet

A supportive and informative guide for kidney cancer patients, carers, and families across the UK.

This booklet is created and published by **Kidney Cancer UK**

Contents

BDA The Association of UK Dietitians
Renal Nutrition
Specialist Group

This booklet aims to give general information that you may find useful before and after surgery. It is important to follow any specific advice given by your hospital and the material in this booklet.

The following industry partners provided financial support to Kidney Cancer UK to cover the costs associated with the production and dissemination of this information booklet. All editorial control has been retained by Kidney Cancer UK.

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Welcome...

...to our "Kidney Cancer & You - Diet" booklet

To help you with your diet after Kidney Cancer, we have prepared this booklet to read at your leisure. We hope this booklet will help you make the dietary lifestyle changes that will help in your recovery.

If you require support or have any questions on any aspect of kidney cancer care, please ring our **Support Line** on **0800 002 9002**. In addition, we also run the following support services:

Free Counselling service; please call **0800 002 9002** or **01223 870 008** to arrange a consultation

- We provide closed Facebook Groups; find these by searching '**kidneycanceruksupportgroup**' or '**kidneycancerukmetastaticgroup**' or '**kidneycanceruksurgerygroup**' or **'kidneycancerukcarersgroup'**
- We present webinars on Zoom
- Online support sessions, to find out more visit kcuk.org.uk/online-support-groups
- And there are a number of local support groups around the UK please call **01223 870 008** or visit **kcuk.org.uk/patient-support-groups** to find out more

We are **'here to listen, inform and support'**

Diet after Kidney Cancer

Who is this information for?

This information is for those living with a single kidney after kidney cancer, and whose remaining kidney is working well. If you are currently receiving treatment for your kidney cancer or you have an impairment in your remaining kidney, then this information may not be suitable for you and you should seek personalised advice from a dietitian or your oncology/kidney (renal) team.

What diet should I eat after kidney cancer?

In general, people with one healthy kidney do not need a special diet. It is however, important that you eat a healthy well-balanced diet that is low in salt as this may help prevent health conditions that can damage your remaining kidney.

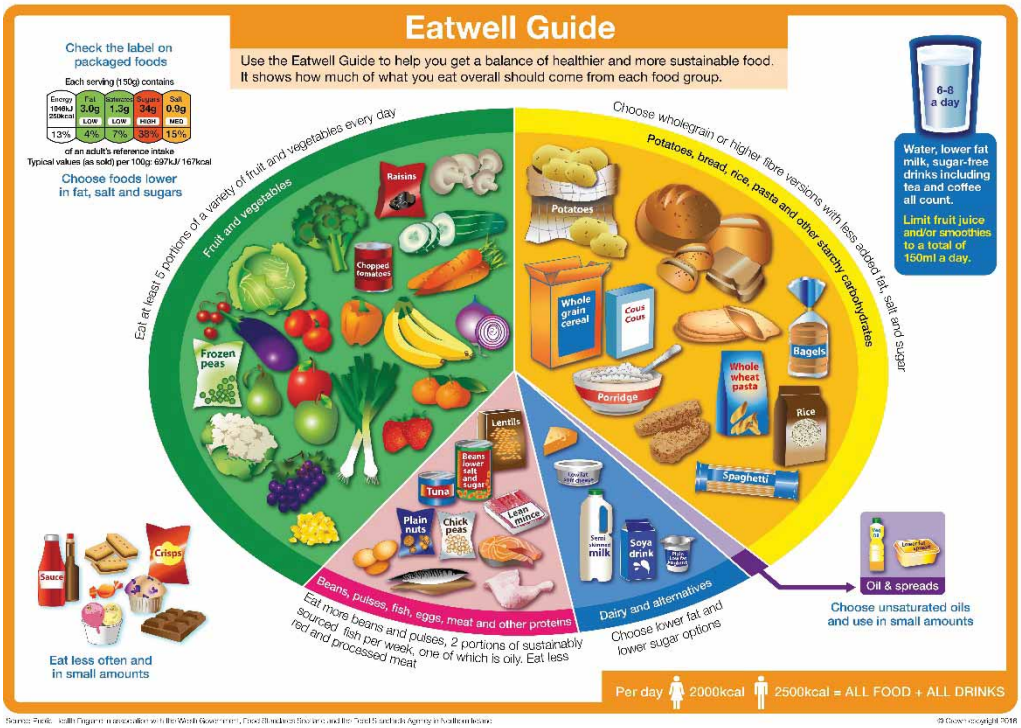
Which conditions can damage my kidney?

Having high blood pressure (hypertension), diabetes (both type 1 or 2), heart disease or being an unhealthy weight can all put additional pressure on your kidney. Eating a healthy diet as well as maintaining a healthy lifestyle may prevent you developing these conditions or help you manage these conditions if you already have them.

What is a healthy balanced

Eating a healthy balanced diet is about enjoying a wide variety of foods that are good for your health and overall wellbeing, and does not mean 'dieting', or a boring or difficult to follow diet. The following guide, called the 'Eatwell Guide' best explains what a healthy diet looks like. The picture below shows the proportions of foods needed over a period of a day or even a week, not necessarily at each meal time.

Your notes



The 'Eatwell Guide' explained

Fruit and

Eat a high variety of fruits and vegetables, at least 5 portions a day, more if possible. Fruit and vegetables should make up over a third of the food we eat each day.

- 1 portion is approximately the size of the palm of your hand (80g).
- Fruit juice or smoothies count as only 1 portion and should be limited to 150ml a day.
- Dried fruit should be limited to 30g a day.

Starchy carbohydrates (potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other

Base your meals on wholegrain, high fibre starchy carbohydrates with minimal added salt, fat, and sugar. For example, wholegrain bread, brown rice, wholemeal pasta, quinoa, bulgur wheat, millet, and plain oats.

Enjoy minimally processed potatoes, sweet potatoes, or other starchy foods (ideally with their skins to benefit from the extra fibre).

Wholegrains and the skin on potatoes have more fibre, which is filling and may help with weight control, blood sugar control, and lowering cholesterol.

Some people think that bread, rice, pasta and potatoes are fattening, but gram for gram it contains less than half the calories of fat. You just need to watch the fats you add when you're cooking and serving this sort of food, because that's what increases the calorie content.

Dairy or dairy

Include some low fat (or reduced fat) dairy or dairy alternative milks, such as skimmed, 1% or semi-skimmed milk. For non-dairy try unsweetened almond, oat, soya, or rice milk with added calcium.

Lower fat and lower sugar dairy yoghurt, or an alternative such as a soya, oat or almond yoghurt. Plain yoghurt is naturally lower in sugar and can be flavoured by adding fruit (fresh, tinned, stewed).

Keep hard cheese to occasional use, and choose the reduced fat or low-fat options.

Fat (Oils and

Use small amounts of unsaturated fats such as olive oil or rapeseed oil in cooking.

For spreading use a low-fat vegetable spread, such as an olive-oil or sunflower oil spread, but just use a small amount. If using butter, then opt for unsalted and use very sparingly.

Avoid or limit excess fat and particularly fat/oils high in saturated fats, such as ghee, lard, butter, palm oil and coconut oil.

Remember that all types of fat (even healthy fats) are high in energy and should be limited in the diet.

Protein (Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other

Beans, peas and lentils are a good, cheap alternative to meat because they're naturally low in fat and high in fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals. Try using lentils, chickpeas, beans and peas as well as other vegetable-based sources of protein, such as tofu and mycoprotein (Quorn) in place of meat more often.

Nuts and seeds are also a source of healthy protein but choose plain, unsalted where possible.

Aim for 2 portions of fish a week and include at least 1 oily fish per week.

Eggs can be included but cook with minimal fat.

Choose some lean meat (such as skinless chicken or turkey), and limit red and processed meat.

High fat, salt and sugar foods (Crisps, chocolate, cakes, biscuits, condiments, sauces)

If you do eat these foods, then you should try to have them less often and in small amounts. This includes products such as chocolate, cakes, biscuits, full-sugar soft drinks, ice-cream, crisps, cream, sauces, condiments and salad dressings.

Your notes

Diet after Kidney Cancer

What should I drink and how much?

Drink adequate amounts of fluid so that you stay hydrated. The amount of fluid needed will vary from person to person and depend on level of activity, how sweaty you are, and the temperature. You don't need to drink excessive amounts, just enough to keep your urine a pale straw colour is adequate. It is best to limit sugary drinks. If you drink fruit juice or smoothies then limit to 150ml a day. Tea and coffee both contribute to fluid but limit caffeine to 300mg a day or consider decaffeinated drinks as caffeine can increase your blood pressure. 300mg is approximately 2-3 coffees depending on strength or 5-6 teas.

What about alcohol?

There is no safe level of drinking, however, if you do consume alcohol then then this should be kept within the government guidance of no more than 14 units per week for both men and women. Spreading your drinking evenly over three or more days and having several alcohol-free days per week (always check alcohol consumption is safe with any of your medication). If you do not currently consume alcohol, then there is no health benefit to starting now.

What about sugar?

Many packaged foods and drinks contain surprisingly high amounts of sugar, including some breakfast cereals, yoghurts and fruit juices. Consuming too much sugar can lead to unwanted weight gain and obesity which may risk your long-term health and kidney health. To reduce the sugar in your diet swap sugary breakfast cereals for plain cereals such as porridge oats, wholewheat biscuits, shredded wholewheat, or no added sugar muesli. Swap sugary yoghurts and corner-style yogurts for plain or lower sugar alternatives and flavour with added fruit. Cereal bars can also contain a lot of sugar so check the nutritional information label – see guide below.

Your notes

How do I eat less salt?

As a general population we should all be eating less salt due to the risks of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke, however, following kidney cancer, eating less salt becomes even more important to look after your remaining kidney. The salt we eat can come from three main sources

1. The food itself (naturally present in many foods)
2. The salt we add when cooking or at the table
3. The salt added to processed foods e.g. cereals, bread, cheese, ham and many other foods, (these are the main sources of salt in our diet)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends reducing salt to less than 5g per day, this is about 1 teaspoon.

Tips to reducing salt in your diet include:

Limit processed foods, convenience foods and take away foods

Limit salty foods such as crisps, ready-made cooking sauces, salty condiments, smoked fish, processed meats, hard cheeses, pickled foods and salted nuts.

Cook meals from scratch wherever possible

Reduce or avoid adding salt to home cooking or at the table, this includes all types of salt, e.g. rock, sea, Himalayan pink, garlic and kosher.

Where recipes call for stocks or sauces, choose low salt or the reduced salt alternatives that are widely available.

Flavour food using a variety of spices, herbs (dried and fresh), lemon or lime juice, ginger, garlic and vinegars. Be careful with seasoning mixes as these can contain a lot of salt.

Give your tastes buds time to adapt to less salt, this may take 4-6 weeks.

Check and compare food packaging and labels to find those with the lowest amount of added salt, see guide below.

What to look for on nutritional information

Most packaged foods have a colour coded 'Traffic Light Symbol' on the front of their packaging. If buying packaged foods then it is best to avoid or limit those that are coloured red, which means the food is less healthy. Choose more greens and ambers instead. Where possible, aim for foods with mostly green and amber on traffic light symbols and limit those that are red.

Not all foods carry the traffic light symbols, in which case, you may need to check the nutritional information often found on the back of food packaging. What to look for on the nutritional information: Check the 'per 100g'section on the nutritional information table and compare with the table below:

Per 100g	Low	Medium	High
Fat	3g or less	3.1-17.5g	More than 17.5g
Saturated fat	1.5g or less	1.6-5g	Moe than 5g
Sugar	5g or less	5.1-22.5g	More than 22.5g
Salt	0-0.3g	0.3-1.5g	More than 1.5g

Frequently Asked Questions

Your notes

What is a healthy weight

A healthy weight is defined by your BMI. You can calculate your BMI using the NHS calculator link here: https:/ / www.nhs.uk/ live-well/ healthy-weight/ bmi- calculator/ If your BMI is above the healthy range, then you may benefit from losing weight. The best way to lose weight is to follow a healthy balanced diet. You should avoid fad diets or those that exclude a whole food group, for example a low carbohydrate diet.

Can I get my 5 portions of fruit and vegetables from smoothies and fruit juice?

Because smoothies and fruit juice will be a source of high sugar and contain very little fibre, these can only ever count as 1 of your 5 a day. They should also be limited to 150ml a day of either smoothie or fruit juice (not both).

Which fish are oily

Mackerel, kippers, pilchards, tuna (fresh or frozen), trout, sprats, salmon, herring, sardines, crab (fresh), whitebait, and swordfish are all sources of oily fish.
Ideally limit those that are smoked, or tinned in brine as these are high in salt.

Diet after Kidney Cancer

Which meats are considered red meat and what is processed meat?

The World Health Organisation has classed the following meats as red meat:
Beef, veal, pork, lamb, mutton, horse and goat.
A processed meat is a meat that has been changed by salting, curing, fermentation, smoking or by adding a preservative or additive. Examples include; hot dogs (frankfurters), ham, sausages, corned beef, biltong, beef jerky, as well as canned meats. It also includes reformed meats (such as luncheon meat, corned beef, meat rolls, or pressed meat), and meat with an added seasoning, sauce or breadcrumb mix which will often contain additives or preservatives.

Should I cut out all red meat and processed meat?

If you currently eat red meat and processed meats, then you do not need to completely cut them out, however it is advised that you limit them to no more than 70g a day.

Can I still drink alcohol?

As with the general population the risk of developing a range of illnesses, including diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers, increase with any amount of alcohol on a regular basis, so there is no safe amount of amount of alcohol that can be consumed. If you do wish to drink, then to keep health risks from alcohol to a low level it is safest not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis. If you regularly drink as much as 14 units per week, it's best to spread your drinking evenly over three or more days. (always check that alcohol is safe with any medication you take).

Your notes

What is a unit of alcohol?

This will vary depending on the drink you have and the strength of that drink, for example:
One unit is equal to:

- Half a pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider (3-4% abv)
- A small pub measure (25ml) of spirits (40% abv)

One and a half units is equal to:

- A small glass (125ml) of wine (12% abv)
- A standard pub measure (35ml of spirits (40% abv)

Three units is equal to:

- A large glass (250ml) of wine (12% abv)
- A pint of strong beer, lager or cider (5% abv)

I read that isoflavones found in soy products are similar to oestrogen which can stimulate some cancers, should I avoid soy foods?

Currently, the evidence suggested that a diet containing naturally occurring isoflavones is safe to eat. Minimally processed soya foods can be used as part of a healthy balanced diet, e.g. soya milk, yogurts, tofu and tempeh.

Your notes

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Do I need to restrict foods high in potassium and phosphate?

You may have read that eating a diet low in potassium and or low phosphate is recommended for your kidneys. If your remaining kidney is working well and you do not have any kidney impairment then it is very unlikely that a low potassium and/or low phosphate diet would be needed. There is no benefit to reducing these minerals in your diet if you do not need to. In fact it may be detrimental as many healthy foods that can support your overall health are high in both potassium and phosphate, such as fruit, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Such diets should only be followed if your specialist doctor, nurse, or dietitian advise it as they will ensure a nutritionally adequate diet.

I've read that some supplements can help me, is this true?

Some supplements could interfere with how well cancer drugs work, if you wish to take a supplement or alternative therapy then you should discuss this with your oncology team.

I've heard that some foods are 'superfoods', should I eat more of these?

Despite It's common use, the term 'superfood' has no regulatory approval and is not a legally recognised term. The term 'superfood' is simply a marketing term that companies and marketing teams will use to encourage you to buy products. Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a 'miracle food' or an 'anti-cancer food' either. Nothing can substitute healthy eating from a varied diet.

Your notes

Should I avoid all sugar?

Sugars are found in several healthy foods, such as wholegrains, fruits and vegetables. These foods are all high in fibre, vitamins and minerals and have been linked with a lower risk of cancer. It is, however, recommended that you reduce excessive sugar in the diet for overall health. For example, sugar found in sugary drinks, sweets, chocolate, biscuits and cakes as well as sugar added to many proceeded foods such as sugary cereals, sauces, condiments and ready meals.

I've heard I should eat more antioxidants, what food should I eat?

Antioxidants are good for overall health and are found in a wide variety of foods, particularly fruits, vegetables and wholegrains. It's important to remember that no one food will provide everything the body needs and that eating a wide variety of different healthy foods will provide antioxidants.

Unsure where to start?

If healthy eating still seems confusing and you're unsure where to start, perhaps try some of these healthy swap suggestions to get started. You don't need to make lots of changes in one go, try one or two swaps at a time. Once your healthy swap becomes an easy daily habit, perhaps try a new healthy swap.

	Healthy Swaps	
Foods	**Eat less of these foods**	**Replace with these alternatives**
Breakfast cereals	Sugar, honey or chocolate coated breakfast cereals	Wheat biscuit or shredded wholegrain breakfast cereals, plain oats, no-added sugar muesli or granola
Bread, rice, pasta and other starchy foods	White bread products, pastries, white pasta and white rice	Wholemeal, granary, seeded, oat bread products with less sugar and salt. Whole wheat pasta, brown rice, other wholegrains such as quinoa, barley, whole wheat couscous
Potato based foods	Fried or processed potatoes such as oven chips, potato waffles, potato croquets or other breaded or processed potatoes	Minimally processed potatoes (ideally in their skin) e.g. home-made oven baked chips or wedges in minimal oil, boiled potatoes or a baked jacket potato
Dairy and alternatives	Full fat milk a dairy product Sugary yoghurts including corner yogurts Thick and creamy yoghurts	Low fat milk such as semi skimmed, skimmed, 1% or a plant milk. Lower fat and lower sugar yoghurts or a plant-based yoghurt low in sugar and fat
Protein foods	Processed meats and processed foods such as ham, burgers, sausages, breaded chicken. Red meat such as beef, lamb, pork and veal.	Eat more beans, lentils, pulses, unsalted nuts. Try Quorn (Mycoproteins) Eggs in minimal fat Fish and lean meats
Snack foods	Snack foods such as cakes, biscuits, crisps, chocolate, sweets, pies, pastries,	Fruit (fresh, tinned or frozen), vegetable crudities with a reduced fat humus dip, low fat plain yogurt with fruit, a handful of plain unsalted nuts, wholegrain crackers with low fat cream cheese and salad vegetables
Drinks	Sugary drinks, barista style coffees with added syrups, sugar, cream or made with full fat milk. Milkshakes. Fruit juice or smoothies	Water, tea, coffee, herbal teas with no added sugar or honey and a low-fat milk or milk alternative. Sugar free drinks such as squash Low fat milk or milk alternative

Still not sure where to start?

If you find yourself stuck for meal ideas, perhaps use these meal ideas to provide some inspiration.

Meal Ideas
Breakfast • Wholegrain cereal such as Wheat biscuits or shredded wholegrain cereal with a low-fat milk and added fruit • Low sugar or no added sugar granola or muesli with a low-fat milk and added fruit • Porridge or overnight made with a low-fat milk and added fruit • Low fat plain yoghurt, with fruit, nut, seeds and oats. • Wholegrain toast with reduced salt baked beans or poached eggs and grilled tomatoes or mushrooms • Wholegrain toast with a low-fat spread and a small amount of jam or marmalade, plus a piece of fruit • Wholemeal bagel or English muffin with a low salt/sugar nut butter and fruit
Lunch • Baked beans on wholemeal toast with grilled tomatoes and mushrooms or sautéed courgettes • Rice or pasta salad with tuna (tinned in spring water), tinned chickpeas or other legumes and a range of salad vegetables with a low fat/sugar dressing • Vegetable and/or lentil/ split pea soup with a wholegrain roll • Some lean meat, chicken, salmon, egg, or reduced fat cheese in a wholemeal sandwich, wrap or roll with plenty of salad • Wholemeal pitta with hummus and salad vegetables • Baked potato with tuna (tinned in spring water), spring onions and sweetcorn, served with a salad
Dinner • Vegetable and/or lentil/chickpea curry with wholegrain rice • Chicken and vegetable curry served with wholegrain rice • Vegetable and bean chilli with wholegrain rice • Vegetable or chicken and vegetable risotto • Lean mince, Quorn or lentil Bolognese, chilli or cottage pie with pasta, rice, quinoa, or potato or sweet potato and vegetables or a side salad • Bean burger in a wholemeal bun with salad • Vegetable pasta bake with side salad • Some lean meat, chicken or fish served with vegetables or salad and homemade potato wedges or rice/pasta • Tuna (tinned in spring water) and wholegrain pasta baked with roasted vegetables • Tofu and vegetable stir fry served with wholegrain noodles
Deserts • Fresh fruit, such as pear, apple, small orange or clementine • Drained tinned fruit (in juice, not syrup) with a low-fat plain yoghurt • Fruit based pie or crumble (made with oats and minimal sugar) • Baked apple or poached pear with a low-fat plain yoghurt
Snacks • A piece of fruit • Low fat plain yoghurt • Hummus and oat cakes, rice cakes or wholegrain cracker • 1 small handful of plain unsalted nuts • Bread sticks, wholemeal crackers and some low-fat cream cheese with vegetable crudities

Useful Resources

British Dietetic Association (BDA) food facts
- www.bda.uk.com

Kidney stones
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/kidney-stones/prevention/
- www.theurologyfoundation.org

Gout Society
www.ukgoutsociety.org

British Heart Foundation
- https://www.bhf.org.uk/

Heart UK
- www.heartuk.org.uk/
- www.heartuk.org.uk/healthy-living/introduction#diet

Action on Salt
- www.actiononsalt.org.uk/

Other Kidney Charities
- Kidney Care UK www.kidneycareuk.org/
- Kidney Beam beamfeelgood.com/kidney-disease
- National Kidney Federation www.kidney.org.uk/
- Kidney Research UK www.kidneyresearchuk.org/

Date Time

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Your donation is essential to the work we carry out

We receive no government funding and are dependent on your donations whilst also raising money from other sources. How could you or someone you know help us and make a difference?

- SET UP A MONTHLY DONATION
- LEAVE US A GIFT IN YOUR WILL
- ORGANISE A FUNDRAISING EVENT
- TAKE PART IN ONE OF OUR CAMPAIGNS
- VOLUNTEER

With your generous support we can continue to invest in patient support and research. Without research, the treatment patients receive today will be the treatment they receive tomorrow.

Please visit our website for more information about how you can support our work **www.kcuk.org.uk/support-us** or return the form below via Freepost to simply 'Kidney Cancer UK' or ring 01223 870 008 where we will be happy to help you.

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Kidney Cancer UK

THE UK'S LEADING KIDNEY CANCER CHARITY

Website: www.kcuk.org.uk

Our Free Support Line: 0800 002 9002
(open Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm)

Our mission:

Kidney Cancer UK is the UK's leading charity dedicated to kidney cancer. Our mission is to minimise the impact of the disease by raising awareness, providing vital patient information, and supporting research into its causes, prevention, and treatment.

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