

Nutrition Tips While on Prednisone

Your weight and nutrition status are important parts of having an optimal transplant, so it is important that you continue to work at optimizing these even while on prednisone.

Some of the common side-effects of prednisone that can impact your nutrition status and weight include:

- Increased appetite
- Changes in body fat distribution
- Weight gain
- Fluid retention
- High blood sugar

These side effects can vary from person to person. Unfortunately, for many people they cannot be avoided. The good news is there are some diet choices that can help manage them.

Here are some tips:

- 1. Have regular meals and/or snacks.** Regular meals/snacks can help avoid extreme hunger as well as spikes in your blood sugar levels.

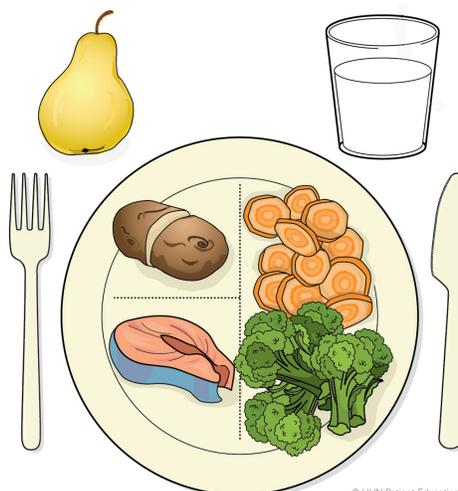
Aim to bring something to eat with you when you know you will be away from home during meal times.

Try having:

- A piece of fruit + yogurt cup
- Veggies + hummus
- Whole grain bread with natural peanut butter and a touch of jam

Some people find planning to have **5-6 smaller meals during the day** helpful instead of 3 larger meals.

- 2. Model your meals after the Plate Model.** Fill $\frac{1}{2}$ of your plate with vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ plate with grains or starchy foods (e.g. potatoes, corn, pasta) and $\frac{1}{4}$ plate protein.



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Following the Plate Model can be helpful because:

- a. You are including **high fibre** foods. High fibre foods are digested slower than lower fibre foods and this can help you feel full longer.

Examples of high fibre foods include:

- Whole fruit (e.g. berries, pears, apples)
- Vegetables (e.g. broccoli, sweet potatoes, romaine lettuce, bell peppers)
- Whole grains (e.g. whole grain bread, 100% whole wheat bread, brown rice, barley, shredded wheat cereal, All bran cereal, etc.)

When reading the nutrition facts table, look for grain products with **4g or more** of fibre per serving.

- b. You are including a good source of **protein**. Protein helps with healing, building/maintaining muscles and immune system function. It also can help you to feel more satisfied for longer after meals.

Good sources of protein include:

- Lean chicken breast
- Milk or soy milk
- Lean meat (pork tenderloin, beef tenderloin)
- Eggs
- Fish (not deep fried or canned in oil)
- Nuts/seeds or nut butters
- Lentils or legumes (kidney beans, chickpeas, etc.)
- Lower-fat cheese (<20% MF)
- Yogurt, especially Greek style or Skyr
- Lower-sodium cottage cheese

3. **Stay hydrated.** Drinking water, unsweetened sparkling water, low-sodium club soda, lower-fat milk or unsweetened tea are good options.

Avoid juice, vegetable cocktail, regular pop, smoothies, fancy coffees or other sweetened drinks as it is easy to get a lot of extra sugar, salt and calories from these.

4. Prednisone can also cause your body to hold onto extra fluid. Swelling in your feet or abdomen can be a sign of this. Too much fluid in your body can also cause or worsen shortness of breath.

Sodium (salt) can also cause extra fluid to build up in your body. **Limiting how much sodium you consume** can help prevent fluid build-up in the body.

Tips to reduce sodium in your diet:

- Avoid using salt in your cooking and remove the salt shaker from the table
- Choose low-sodium or no added salt canned foods (e.g. soups, vegetables, sauces)
- Avoid highly-processed foods (e.g. deli and cured meats, bacon, frozen meals, seasoned pasta and rice mixes)
- Buy more fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables and try to prepare meals at home
- Eat out less often and ask for your meal to be prepared without salt
- Reading food labels to find out how much sodium is in that food. This can help you include convenience foods without the extra sodium.

When reading the nutrition facts table for sodium, look for:

- a. The serving size. Make sure you know how much you will be eating compared to the serving size. If you eat the same size portion as listed on the label, you are eating the same amount of nutrients listed.
- b. Items that provide **less than 100mg of sodium per serving or 5% or less of the Daily Value (DV)**.

5. Prednisone can weaken your bones over time. Calcium and Vitamin D are two important nutrients that help keep your bones strong.

Include several high calcium foods each day. Some examples include:

- Lower-fat milk
- Lower-fat cheese (<20%MF)
- Yogurt
- Fortified and unsweetened non-dairy milks (soy, almond, rice)
- Canned salmon with bones

Speak to your doctor or dietitian if you are concerned that you aren't getting enough Calcium and Vitamin D from foods.

6. Stay active!

Even though your appetite may be increased while on prednisone, following the above tips can help you to manage your appetite and steer you away from “empty calorie” foods that may be difficult to resist (e.g. chips, muffins, cookies, etc.).

If you are having a lot of specific food cravings that happen when you are not physically hungry, you may be experiencing emotional eating. Contact your dietitian for additional support and resources.