

Eating During Hemodialysis

It is best to eat before or after dialysis as eating and drinking during dialysis can cause many problems. If you have diabetes, you may need to eat during dialysis.

When food enters the stomach, blood rushes to the stomach and intestines for digestion. This means less blood is flowing to the heart and causes a drop in blood pressure.

Signs that you should not eat during dialysis

Do not eat during dialysis if you:

- have a cough
- have low blood pressure
- have diarrhea
- feel sick to your stomach (nauseated) and/or are vomiting
- are feeling sleepy or are not alert

What can happen if you eat during dialysis

- You could have low blood pressure after eating.
- The quality of your dialysis could be affected if you need to stop early or dialyze at a lower speed because you are not feeling well.
- If you dialyze in a bed, you could choke on your food. If you dialyze in a chair, you could choke if your chair is tipped back quickly.
- You could get an infection by eating food from unclean surfaces.
- Tube feeding during dialysis may cause a drop in blood pressure or increase the risk of choking. The nurse may decide to stop the tube feeds during the dialysis session.

If you choose to eat during dialysis

If you choose to eat during dialysis, limit your food intake to small amounts of foods that are easy to eat such as:

- Nutrition supplement drinks like Nepro[®], Novasource Renal[®], Boost Fruit Beverage[®] or Ensure[®]. Ask your dietitian which one is best for you.
- Low potassium fruits such as apples, pears, peaches, plums, or mandarin oranges.
- Low potassium vegetables such as celery, carrot sticks, or sliced cucumbers.
- Unsalted pretzels, popcorn, or crackers.
- Bagel, pita, or English muffin with cream cheese.
- Graham crackers, vanilla wafers, or arrowroot cookies.
- Sandwich (avoid deli meats or high sodium canned meats).

Speak with your nurse or dietitian if you have any questions or concerns about eating during dialysis.

Tips to manage your hunger

- Eat a good-sized meal before you come to dialysis so you don't get hungry.
- Pack healthy snacks or a meal to bring with you. You can eat just before or just after your dialysis.