

Eating during Hemodialysis

Eating during hemodialysis can help you feel better, have more energy, and keep your muscles strong. If you have diabetes, then you may need to eat during treatment to prevent low blood sugar.

Talk to your healthcare team to see if eating during dialysis is right for you. It may not be right for everyone.

Tips:

- Pack healthy snacks to bring with you.
- If you take phosphorus binders, bring them to your treatment to take with your food.
- Bring food in an insulated bag with a freezer pack to keep it cool and safe.
- Before you eat, wash your hands, and clean all surfaces that your food will touch.
- Sit upright when you eat. This will lower your risk of choking.
- Eat small amounts. Choose foods that are easy to hold and eat.

Snack ideas:

- fruits like mandarin oranges, apples, pears, peaches, or plums 
- vegetables like pepper strips, carrot sticks, or sliced cucumbers 
- unsalted pretzels, popcorn
- unsalted crackers with 1 oz (30 g) hard cheese
- pitas or English muffins with cream cheese
- Graham crackers, vanilla wafers, or arrowroot cookies
- sandwiches like egg or tuna salad, peanut butter, or roast chicken 
- nutrition supplement drinks, protein bars, or granola bars. Talk to your dietitian about which are best for you.

Reasons not to eat during dialysis

For safety and comfort, do not eat during dialysis if you:

- have low blood pressure
- are at risk for choking
- have diarrhea
- have a cough
- feel sick to your stomach (are nauseated and/or vomiting)
- are feeling sleepy or not alert
- have a tracheostomy or breathing tube

Low blood pressure during dialysis:

When you eat, blood moves into your stomach to digest food. For some people, this can cause low blood pressure while you eat or after you eat. If your blood pressure gets too low, you may need to stop dialysis early or lower the pump speed. This could mean your treatment may not work as well.

If you can't eat during treatment, try to:

- Eat a meal before you come to dialysis so you don't get hungry.
- Bring a snack or meal to eat after your dialysis.

Note: If you need to limit your potassium, avoid eating high potassium foods, like potato chips, during your treatment.

Potassium from foods eaten during treatment will not be removed from your blood as you dialyze. Instead, your blood potassium will go up after your treatment is over.



Health Link also has dietitians who can answer nutrition questions. Call 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian.