



[myrenalnutrition.com](https://myrenalnutrition.com)

A focus on kidney transplant

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**News, stories  
hints & tips**

for children with kidney disease and their families



VitaFlo™

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# My Renal Nutrition NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the fifth edition of the My Renal Nutrition newsletter - a newsletter devised by Vitaflo™ for children with kidney disease and their family, with content written by individuals who have personal experiences of living with kidney disease as well as healthcare professionals who work alongside patients with this condition.

This edition of the newsletter focuses on kidney transplant. There is information about diet post transplant and a patient discusses their experience of having a kidney transplant. You will also find a tasty recipe that all the family can enjoy as well as activity ideas.

If you have a story to share or even a great recipe idea, please let your dietitian know and we can be sure to include it in future newsletters.

Yours sincerely  
The team at Vitaflo



## WHAT'S INSIDE....

### INFORMATION ON KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

### MY TRANSPLANT JOURNEY

*from a patients perspective*

### HEALTHY EATING AFTER A TRANSPLANT

### RECIPE IDEA

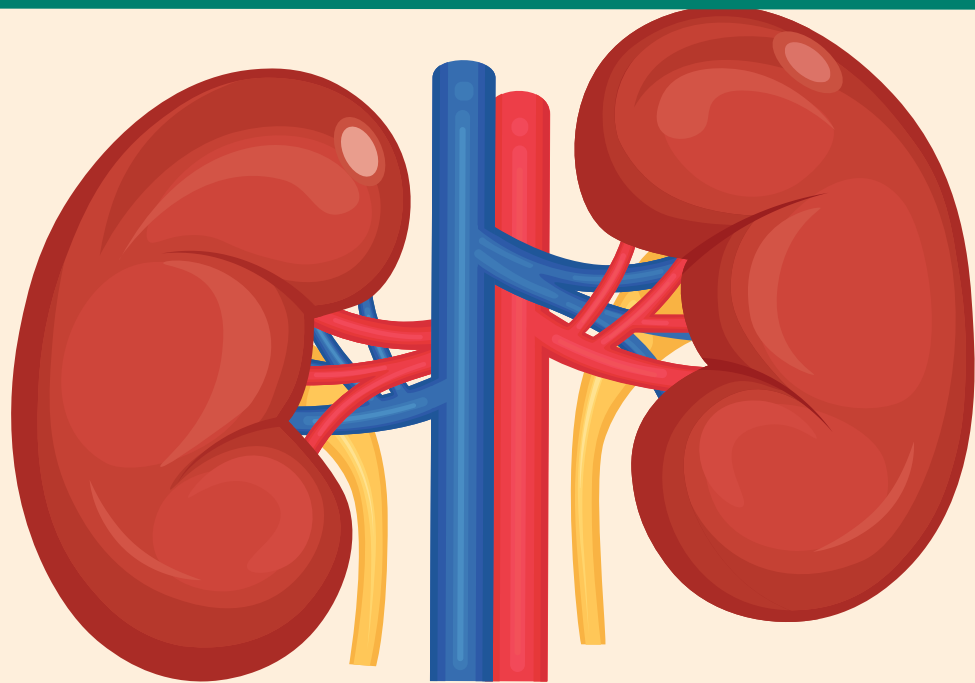
*Savoury Beef Cobbler*

### KEEPING ACTIVE



# HAVING A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

A kidney transplant is when a healthy kidney from one person is transplanted into an individual whose kidneys are not working very well.



A successful kidney transplant is often the management goal for many young people with kidney disease whose kidneys are failing. Individuals on dialysis will no longer need dialysis once they have had a transplant. The transplanted kidney is matched to the individual patient in terms of blood group and tissue type.

## TRANSPLANTED KIDNEYS CAN COME FROM THREE SOURCES:



### Living related transplants

This term means to receive a kidney from a blood relative.



### Living unrelated transplants

This term means to receive a kidney from a person who is not a blood relative but has been found to be a good match in terms of blood group and tissue type



### Cadaveric transplants

This term means to receive a kidney from someone who has died and who has chosen to donate their kidneys.

**Having a kidney transplant depends on matching the right kidney with the right patient at the right time.**

PLEASE SPEAK TO YOUR MEDICAL TEAM IF YOU HAVE ANY WORRIES OR QUESTIONS ABOUT KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS.

## THE TRANSPLANT TEAM

A specialist medical team will look after patients who are due to have a transplant. This team includes a transplant nurse, a transplant surgeon and the paediatric nephrologist.



## THE OPERATION

When having a kidney transplant operation, the surgeon will put the patient to sleep with a medicine called an anaesthetic, so the patient won't feel or see anything while they operate. The operation will take approximately 2-4 hours. A healthy kidney will be taken from one person (the donor) and placed into the body of the person who needs it (the recipient). The patient's kidneys will usually be left in place and the transplanted kidney is placed in the abdomen, just above the groin. The new kidney will have its own blood supply to ensure it works well.



## AFTER THE OPERATION

The medical team will keep a close eye on the patient after the transplant operation. They will monitor blood pressure, fluid intake and urine output (i.e. how much wee is produced). Blood tests will also be taken so that the doctors can monitor how well the new kidney is functioning. The patient may have to stay in hospital for about 2 weeks after the operation so that the doctors can be sure that the new kidney is working well before going home.

All patients who have a kidney transplant will need to take medications called immunosuppressants. These medications dampen down the patient's immune system to stop the body from rejecting or fighting against the new kidney, as the body may recognise the new kidney as not being 'its own'.

After a transplant, there may be fewer dietary restrictions than before, and it is important to follow a healthy diet. Please see the section on 'healthy eating after a kidney transplant' in this newsletter for more information.



## WHAT IF THE TRANSPLANT IS NOT SUCCESSFUL?

There is a risk that an individual's body may 'reject' the new kidney. It is important for patients to take their immunosuppression medication carefully to try to avoid this from happening. If a transplant fails, a patient will usually need to have dialysis.

A kidney transplant does not cure kidney failure, however, a successfully transplanted kidney can mean that an individual will feel better, can stop dialysis if they were on it, and have a healthy, varied diet. A new kidney may work for many years; however, some children may need further kidney transplants in the future.





# MY EXPERIENCE OF HAVING A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

by Aphria

I was born with congenital nephrotic syndrome which led me to having both of my kidneys removed. I had my first kidney transplant at aged 3 – the kidney donor was my father. Unfortunately this kidney started to fail when I was 18 years of age. I went back onto haemodialysis, both in the hospital unit and then home haemodialysis for 2 years. My second transplant was from another living related donor.



## LIFE PRIOR TO TRANSPLANT

e.g. dietary restrictions, fluid restriction etc

- Prior to having my kidney transplant life was very different. My immune system was very susceptible to infection, as my kidney function was declining, it was difficult for my body to manage any form of infection so I would end up in hospital and recovery to my usual baseline health would be around 6 months.
- The aim was to complete my undergraduate studies prior to starting dialysis, however my kidney function declined rapidly and dialysis was started under emergency circumstances.
- I had little awareness of just how beneficial dialysis would be to me. Dialysis is commonly seen as a hindrance, however, for me it enabled me to have a great level of independence compared to life before dialysis as I was feeling so much better compared to how I was feeling prior to starting dialysis.
- My appetite and fluid intake is massively influenced by having kidney disease and I had to focus my attention on what I could and could not eat and drink. Before dialysis my appetite was very limited; I mainly just ate snacks as I was rarely hungry. My appetite is only really coming back now 18 months post-transplant, and that is due to giving significant focus to my appetite and working on my relationship with food.



## YOUR WORRIES ABOUT HAVING A TRANSPLANT

- To me, at aged 18, my second transplant felt like my first major surgery.
- I was apprehensive towards the discomfort but not worried in terms of the operation as I knew it was for the better and how fortunate I was to be able to have a living kidney donor.
- Of course there is always the worry of waking up and finding out the transplant didn't go to plan and that you remain on dialysis. I was not naive to the possibility of this but very much kept it as something we would cross and deal with if and when necessary.
- Waking up from the transplant I felt better than expected, nauseous from the general anaesthetic but in general surprised at how well I felt....oh and weeing SO much!!
- Worries about personal relationships, as my body was to undergo another change, including high dose steroids and immunosuppression, I was apprehensive as to how this would affect me as a person and not to sound vain, but of course visually!



## LIFE POST TRANSPLANT

- Life post transplant, certainly more of a roller coaster than I thought, and personally for me, harder than the kidney failure journey as that oddly becomes a place of safety, particularly during dialysis treatment as, for me, my health became the most stable it had been in a long time.
- It is worth considering how fixated people can get with the renal diet. It becomes very easy to use food as a method of control and lose all enjoyment of it – and not seeing its benefits at all, particularly when weight is at the forefront of everything. This meant post-transplant I realised the need to rebuild a healthy relationship with food and learning its benefits again.
- Getting used to the high dose immunosuppressive treatment is difficult and comes with a wealth of side effects, some of which you get used to and others you mention to your renal team to come up with a more sufficient treatment plan.
- 18-months post transplant and it's the first time I feel things are levelling out and settling down, I can breath again and focus on what I want to!





# HEALTHY EATING AFTER KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

Following having a kidney transplant, it can sometimes be confusing on what you can now have to eat and drink, especially if you have had to follow dietary restrictions in the past.

It is important that you have a varied and balanced diet.

**Having a healthy, varied diet:**

- Helps provide all the nutrients that you need to grow and develop
- Helps to maintain a healthy body weight
- Reduces the risk of other health problems later in life such as heart disease
- Helps to keep your new kidney healthy

Before having your kidney transplant, your appetite may have been poor and you may have been advised to add extra calories to meals to prevent you from losing weight and to enable you to grow. After a kidney transplant, many children find that their appetite improves and so the additional calories and snacks that you may have been having may no longer be required.

**Let's have a look at what a balanced diet includes:**

## FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Fruit and vegetables provide important vitamins and minerals. They also are a great source of fibre which is important to help prevent constipation. It is recommended that children should eat five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. A portion of fruit or vegetables is a handful size. Frozen fruit and vegetables, fruit tinned in fruit juice or tinned vegetables (without added sugar or salt) as well as raw and cooked varieties all count towards your 5 a day. It is important to include a variety of different types of fruit and vegetables as each type contains different vitamins and minerals – aim for a rainbow of colours. A portion of fruit juice is a small glass a day (about 150mls) however avoid having more than one glass a day as fruit juice can affect your teeth and is not a good source of fibre. If you have fruit juice, it is best to have this at a mealtime to help protect your teeth, as fruit juices can contain a lot of natural sugars.

Avoid grapefruit or grapefruit juice as these can interact with some of your medications such as tacrolimus. If you're not that keen on fruit and vegetables, keep trying different varieties to find the ones that you do like and enjoy. Add them to other meals like in breakfast cereals, porridge, yoghurt and pancakes.

**Having a healthy diet can protect your new kidney transplant and may help it last longer! Here are some things you can do to help keep your kidney transplant healthy!**

## CARBOHYDRATE

You should have a source of carbohydrate, such as bread, pasta, rice, couscous, fufu, yam, quinoa, potatoes at each of your meals. Carbohydrates provide us with energy so we can play and learn. Where possible, try to have wholegrain options such as wholemeal bread, wholemeal pasta and wholegrain breakfast cereals such as oats and wheat biscuits as these are high in fibre. Fibre helps to keep our gut healthy.

## DAIRY AND DAIRY ALTERNATIVES

Calcium is a mineral that is important to help build and maintain strong bones and teeth. It is recommended that children receive three portions of dairy or a suitable calcium fortified dairy alternative each day.

Examples of portions of dairy and dairy alternatives include a:

- Regular sized pot of yogurt (125g) or a calcium fortified plant-based alternative
- Small matchbox size portion of cheese or a calcium fortified plant-based alternative
- Small glass (200mls) of cow's milk or a calcium fortified plant-based alternative such as soya drinks. However, children under 5 years of age shouldn't have rice drinks.

## PROTEIN

Protein is important to help you grow. Aim to have a protein containing food twice a day or three times a day if you are following a vegetarian or vegan diet. Protein can be either plant based such as tofu, lentils and beans or animal protein such as meat, chicken, fish or eggs. Healthier animal protein options include lean cuts of meat, chicken (without the skin) and plain fish or meat instead of battered or crumbed processed varieties. A portion of protein is approximately the size of your palm. Grilling & roasting are healthier cooking methods rather than frying. Processed protein options such as hams, sausages, and burgers can be high in salt, which is not kidney friendly and they may also be high in unhealthy fats.



# SO NOW WE KNOW WHAT TO PUT ON OUR PLATE, HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE HAVE MEALS AND SNACKS?

Have regular balanced meals, aiming for three meals per day such as breakfast, lunch and an evening meal. This is important to help control appetite and provide the nutrition you need to grow and develop.



If needed, you can have one to two snacks per day in-between meals such as plain popcorn, rice cakes, a small pot of yogurt, a portion of fruit or vegetable sticks (such as carrot and cucumber). This can help fight off hunger and help provide the energy you need.

Try to avoid having high fat snacks (such as cakes, biscuits, crisps), salty snacks (such as salted nuts and crisps) or high sugar snacks (such as sweets, chocolates and biscuits).



## SALT

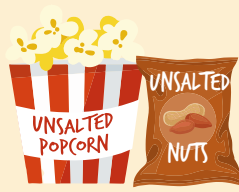
Eating too much salt can increase the risk of high blood pressure which is not healthy for your new kidney or your overall health. Tips to help reduce your salt intake include:



**Avoiding adding salt** to food when cooking and at the table – instead use herbs and spices to help add flavour to meals.



**Choosing, where possible, fresh and unprocessed foods** instead of ready-meals and takeaway meals.



**Choosing unsalted versions** of snacks such as unsalted nuts or popcorn.



**Making homemade sauces** for meals instead of buying tinned or jarred versions.

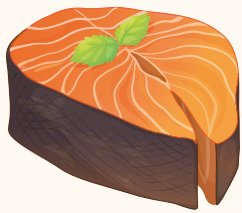
## FLUID INTAKE

It is important to drink enough fluid to help keep your kidney healthy. Your kidney doctors will let you know how much you need to drink each day. An easy way to tell if you are getting enough fluid is if your urine is a pale yellow colour. Water is the best drink to have.



## HEART HEALTH

We all need to follow a healthy diet to help keep our hearts healthy. Limiting certain types of fats called trans fats and saturated fats can help. Using healthy oils, like olive oil, and having foods which contain healthy oils such as nuts, avocado and oily fish can help keep your heart healthy to. Staying a healthy weight and not eating too much salt are all important factors in keeping yourself healthy.

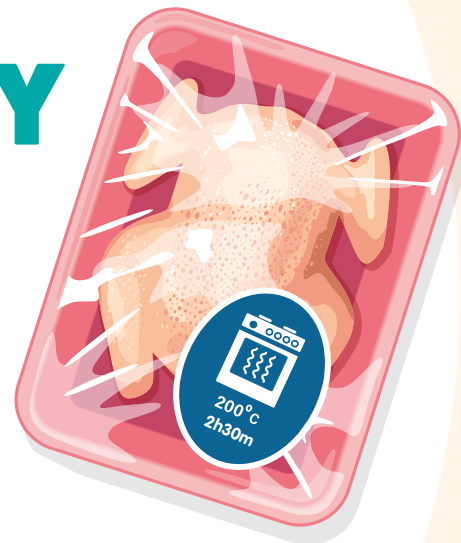


Watch our “All about salt” animation on [www.myrenalnutrition.com](http://www.myrenalnutrition.com) to learn more about how you can reduce your intake of salt.



# FOOD SAFETY AFTER A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

After a kidney transplant, medicines called immunosuppressants are required to help prevent the body from rejecting the new kidney. As these medications can weaken the immune system, good food hygiene is important to help reduce the risk of infections from the food you eat.



**REMEMBER** the 4Cs of good food hygiene recommended by the Food Standards Agency in the UK:



**Clean** - keep kitchen surfaces clean and wash hands properly when preparing food.



**Cook food properly** - follow the cooking instructions on labels and ensure food is thoroughly cooked before serving. Avoid re-heating food once it has been heated.



**Chill and store food properly** - store raw and cooked food separately



**Cross-contamination** - good hand hygiene and keeping kitchen utensils and surfaces clean can help prevent cross contamination.



ALWAYS MAKE SURE THAT YOU USE FOOD WITHIN THEIR USE BY DATES.



## FOODS TO AVOID

- ☒ Raw eggs, unpasteurised milk, unpasteurised cheese and unpasteurised yogurt
- ☒ Raw or uncooked meat, poultry, fish and shellfish
- ☒ Ice cream from ice-cream vans or other soft-serve machines
- ☒ Foods from salad bars and deli counters
- ☒ Pate and cured meats
- ☒ Unwashed fruits, vegetables and salad

## EXERCISE

Daily exercise is very important and has many health benefits including:

- Helping to build strong bones and muscles
- Helping to improve fitness and heart health
- Can help to improve the quality of sleep
- Is important for healthy growth and development throughout childhood

Your transplant doctors and nurses will help provide guidance on when gentle exercise can be started after your transplant.



This information is explained in an animation called "Healthy eating after your kidney transplant" on [www.myrenalnutrition.com](http://www.myrenalnutrition.com)





Serves  
**4**

# Savoury Beef Cobbler

## Ingredients

400g mince beef  
15g plain flour  
1 tsp dried mixed herbs  
60g carrots boiled in unsalted water  
1 reduced salt stock cube

## Scone topping:

50g unsalted butter  
125g self-raising flour  
5g dried mixed herbs  
75mls water

Try making this recipe



## Method

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C/170°C Fan/375°F/Gas 5.
2. Peel and chop the carrots and boil for 10 minutes in unsalted water, throwing away the water.
3. Put carrots and minced beef in the saucepan and cook over a medium heat until the meat is browned, stirring the ingredients together.
4. Add the flour and mixed herbs to the meat mixture and cook, stirring for 1 minute.
5. Measure 250ml of boiling water into the measuring jug, crumble in the stock cube and stir to dissolve.
6. Pour the stock into the saucepan and stir until boiling, then reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes.
7. To make the cobbler topping, sift the flour into a mixing bowl and add the unsalted butter.
8. Using clean hands, rub the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.
9. Add the dried herbs. Gradually add enough water to mix to a soft dough, knead well.
10. Roll out on a floured board to 1cm thick and cut into rounds with the pastry cutter.
11. Pour the meat mixture into an ovenproof dish and arrange the scone rounds on top.
12. Bake in the oven for 12–18 minutes until the scones are well risen and golden brown.

**This recipe is taken from the Kidney Friendly Cookbook produced by dietitians and Dietetic Support Workers at a Paediatric Renal Unit in the UK. Please check with your dietitian or Doctor that this recipe is suitable for you.**

# KEEPING ACTIVE WITH KIDNEY DISEASE

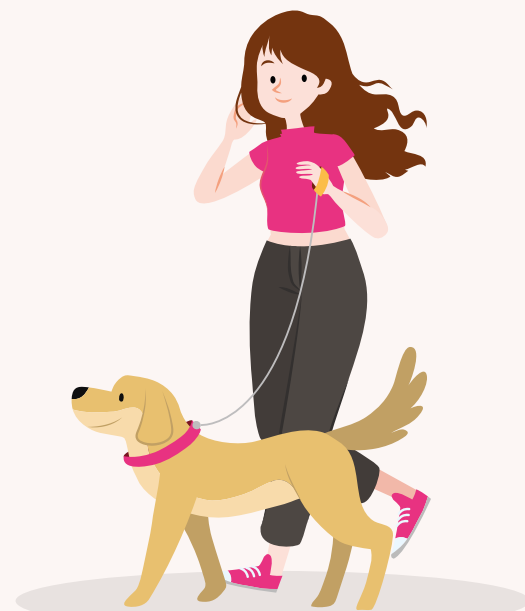
Having kidney disease can make you feel tired. However it is important to try to be as active as possible to try to keep yourself healthy. Research has shown that young people with kidney disease may not get enough exercise. Being more active can be fun and make you feel better, stronger and healthier.



Doing a variety of different types of exercise is important to keep your muscles and bones strong and it helps to keep your heart and lungs healthy.

You can exercise through many fun activities:

- Tug of war with friends
- Going for a walk
- Running with friends
- Trying yoga
- Dancing to your favourite songs
- Setting up an obstacle course and seeing if you can complete it
- Activities with pets and other animals can also be great fun e.g. walk the dog, try horse riding



**TIP:** Activity is often more fun when you do it with family and friends. You can encourage each other and set challenges. Even little things like helping around the house and garden will help you to become more active.

## WORKING YOUR HEART

Cardiovascular exercise (sometimes referred to as "cardio") keeps the heart and lungs strong.

Consider:

- Walking or jogging with a friend.
- Playing sports or games.
- Skipping, trampolining, using a spacehopper, rollerskating, riding your bike, walking a dog.
- Play computer games which encourage activity e.g. dancing games.
- Dance to music – let loose!

The best physical activity plans include strength, cardio and stretching/flexibility. Cardio based activity burns energy and fat. Strength based activities help you burn energy more effectively and stretching can help with flexibility and relaxation.

**REMEMBER**  
It's important to stretch before and after physical activity.

Simple activities can be effective:

**Yoga** – the deep breathing can really be relaxing!

Touch (or get close to) your toes, bending from the waist.



Vitaflo (International) Ltd is a clinical nutrition company who specialise in developing products and resources for those with kidney disease. The information in this newsletter is for general information only and must not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment. Your dietitian and doctor will provide you with advice with regards to the management of your condition and it is important that you follow the advice that they provide.



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