Organ Transplantation: Food-Drug Interactions

Corticosteroids
If you are taking drugs such as prednisone, you may hold (retain) water, gain weight, and have an increase in your appetite. Long-term use may also decrease your strength of your bones and increase your risk of fractures.

To prevent “holding” water, decrease your salt (sodium) intake.

- Limit the amount of processed foods like frozen dinners, packaged entrees, and canned soups.
- Restrict your intake of salted or smoked meat or fish. Avoid luncheon meats, bratwurst, and bacon.
- Try using herbs and spices such as garlic or onion powder instead of garlic or onion salt. One good spice that does not contain salt is Mrs. Dash® Original Blend Spice Seasoning.
- Read food labels to pick the products lowest in salt.
- Be careful using foods that are high in salt like ketchup, pickles, relish and sauerkraut.

You may be hungrier while taking these drugs. If you do not want to gain weight, you may have to control the amount of calories and fat you eat. Eat only at meal times and limit your portion sizes. If you are still hungry, fill up on raw vegetables and fresh fruits.

To prevent bone weakness and fractures, you will need to increase your calcium intake. Milk and milk products are the best sources of calcium. Antacids like Tums® or Rolaids® also contain calcium. Each tablet contains 200 mg of calcium (1 glass of milk contains 250-300 mg). Your doctor or dietitian will suggest that you take extra calcium with Vitamin D or a multivitamin.

While on corticosteroids, you need to make sure you eat enough protein. Milk, meats, eggs, peanut butter and dried beans or peas are high in protein. If your kidneys are working well, you should get at least 2-3 protein servings a day. Ask your dietitian for serving ideas.

In some patients, long-term use of corticosteroids raises blood sugar levels. A special diet with or without medicines may be needed to control blood sugar. Your doctor will discuss this with you if it becomes needed.

Cyclosporine (Neoral®)
- This medicine can be taken with or without food.
- Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice.
- Do not take extra potassium or use salt substitutes that contain potassium while taking this drug.

Tacrolimus (Prograf®)
- This medicine may be taken with or without food as long as consistency is maintained from day to day.
- Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice.
- Do not take extra potassium or use salt substitutes that contain potassium while taking this drug.
Sirolimus (Rapamune®) or Everolimus (Zortress®)
- Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice.
- Either take with food or without food consistently.

Mycophenolate (Myfortic®) (Cellcept®)
- This medicine can be taken with or without food. It is suggested that you take it with food to prevent stomach upset.

Dietary Supplements
- Do not take any herbal, dietary, or over-the-counter supplements unless you check with your transplant team first. These may mix with your drugs in a way that can make them less effective. This may harm your transplanted organ.