

Nutrition for Living Donors

It is important to choose healthy eating habits and lifestyle choices that promote kidney and liver health, before and after you donate.

Healthy Kidney Nutrition

Diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure) are the two main causes of kidney disease. You can prevent both if you keep a healthy weight, stay physically active, and eat a diet low in salt and sugar. In addition, avoid protein supplements and fad diets high in protein. For kidney donors, we recommend trying to achieve 0.35-0.45 grams of protein per pound of your body weight per day. For example, if you weigh 150 lbs, you should aim to achieve 52-68 gm of protein per day.

Healthy Liver Nutrition

Avoid overeating to protect liver health. Keep your cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the normal range, before and after you donate. Always avoid alcohol misuse. You should abstain from alcohol for the first 6 months after liver donation. Afterwards, limit yourself to no more than 1 drink for women or 2 drinks for men per day.

Keep Yourself Healthy Before and After Donating

- Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables
- Eat a diet low in salt
- Reduce saturated and trans fats found in high fat beef, pork, poultry skin, butter, full-fat dairy, palm and coconut oils.
- Eat foods rich in healthy fats (salmon, walnuts, avocado, olive oil, safflower oil, chia and flax seeds).

- Be physically active at least 150 minutes a week
- Keep a healthy body weight
- **Avoid** fad diets and supplements high in protein
- **Avoid** all tobacco and tobacco-like products including vaping
- Limit alcohol
- **Avoid** using drugs.

Build a Healthy Plate

- **Choose high fiber foods.** Fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes, and whole grains are high in fiber.
- **Include a lean protein.** Low-fat meat, chicken, fish, low-fat cheeses, nuts, peanut butter, and eggs are good sources of protein.
- **Eat smaller portions of carbohydrates.** Starches, fruit, milk, yogurt, and sweets can raise blood sugar and should be eaten in smaller portions.

Supplements

Over-the-counter supplements are not FDA regulated, and as such, we recommend avoiding them unless directed by your healthcare provider. Supplements may contain dangerous additives and may be toxic to your kidney or liver.

Remember

High cholesterol alone will not prevent you from donating an organ; however, you still should treat it through diet, physical activity and medicine as needed.

To avoid heart disease, make sure you keep normal cholesterol levels before and after you donate.

Who to Call

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please contact UW Health at the phone number listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#544

Your Body Weight

Height: Weight: Body Mass Index (BMI):	BMI Categories Underweight= <18.5 Healthy weight= 18.5-24.9 Overweight= 25-29.9 Obesity = BMI of 30 or greater
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Your Diabetes Risk

	Results	Goal
Fasting blood glucose		< 100 mg/dL
Hemoglobin Alc		<5.7%

Your Heart Health

Fasting lipid profile	Results	Goal
Cholesterol - The body needs cholesterol to function normally. - The higher the blood cholesterol level, the greater the chances of getting heart disease.		Desirable: < 200 mg/dL Borderline: 200-239 mg/dL High Risk: > 240 mg/dL
Triglycerides - Triglycerides are another type of fat found in the blood and in food. - Triglycerides are produced in the liver. - When you drink alcohol or take in more calories than your body needs, your liver makes more triglycerides.		Desirable:< 150 mg/dL Borderline High: 150-199 mg/dL High Risk: 200-499 mg/dL
HDL - HDL cholesterol is known as "good" cholesterol. - HDL helps remove cholesterol from the body, to keep it from building up in the arteries. - The lower your HDL level, the higher your heart disease risk.		High Risk: < 40 mg/dL Desirable: 40-60 mg/dL
LDL - LDL carries most of the cholesterol in the blood. - It is often called "bad" cholesterol, because too much LDL in the blood can lead to cholesterol buildup and blockage in the arteries.		Optimal: < 130 mg/dL Borderline High: 130-159 mg/dL High Risk: 160-189 mg/dL Very High Risk: >190 mg/dL