Renal diet and constipation

Constipation is a common problem for people following a renal diet. It can affect your ability to dialyse or increase your potassium levels, making you feel generally unwell. Constipation can be caused by a number of factors including a low fibre diet, reduced fluid intake, certain medications, reduced activity levels or a slow moving digestive system.

Fibre in food
By eating adequate fibre you can maintain good bowel habits. Fibre is found in wholegrain cereals and bread, and fruit and vegetables. However, having enough of these high fibre foods may be difficult due to your potassium and/or phosphate diet restrictions.

• Include fibre rich foods at each meal
• Eat high fibre cereals daily. Suitable choices include rolled oats (porridge), semolina, Weet-Bix, Vita Brits, puffed or shredded wheat
• Use a high fibre white bread e.g. Wonder White Hi-Fibre, Tip Top The One. Discuss with your Dietitian if wholegrain breads are a suitable choice

• Have 2 pieces of low potassium fruit each day. Good choices include: pears, apples, mandarins, strawberries and blueberries. If your potassium levels are high, avoid large amounts of high potassium fruit and fruit juices (e.g. pear or prune juice)
• Have 5 serves of low potassium vegetables each day. Good choices include green beans, peas, corn, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and cabbage.

Fibre supplements
If you are finding it hard to include enough fibre from your food intake, a fibre supplement might be helpful. You should begin fibre supplements in small doses and build up slowly. Fibre supplements include:

• Psyllium husks: sprinkle 1 to 2 teaspoons onto breakfast cereal or try mixed into stews/yoghurt or in 250mL of water*.
• Metamucil: mix 1 dose (refer to product instructions for dose size) in 250mL of water*
• **Benefiber**: mix 1 teaspoon of powder into 250mL of water or sprinkle onto cereal, mix with moist foods

*Psyllium husks and Metamucil should be taken 2 hours before or after a meal to avoid interacting with medications.

**Note:** If taking with fluid, please discuss with your Dietitian to avoid exceeding any fluid restrictions you may be required to follow.

**Exercise**
Exercising regularly can help to keep your bowels moving. Just walking for 30 mins every day can help to move your bowels.

**Medications**
Some medications can cause constipation while others can help to open your bowels. Your doctor may ask you to take some medication to help your bowels open regularly, these may include:

- **Movicol**: mix one sachet with 125mL (1/2 cup) of water
- **Coloxyl with senna**: take daily after discussing the dose with your doctor

If you are experiencing constipation, it is important that you advise your Doctor, Nurse or Dietitian.