



Renal Nutrition Group First Line Potassium Lowering Dietary Advice

Why Do You Need To Follow A Low Potassium Diet?

Potassium is a mineral which is needed in the body for your muscles and heart to work properly. The amount of potassium in the blood is normally controlled by your kidneys. When your kidneys are not working properly or if you are taking certain medications the potassium level in the blood can rise. High levels of potassium in the blood can be dangerous as it can have an effect on your heart. In order to keep the level of potassium in your blood safe you need to reduce the amount of potassium in your diet.

You should only follow a low potassium diet if you have been advised by your health care professional to do so.

This leaflet gives you some initial advice to help you reduce the amount of potassium in your diet. However not everyone requires the same level of restriction. If you need to follow a low potassium diet you should be referred to a registered dietitian who will give you personalised dietary advice and ensure that your diet remains well balanced.

Controlling Your Potassium Level

Potassium is found in many foods and drinks including fruits, vegetables, potatoes, milk and some snack foods. You do not necessarily have to avoid all high potassium foods, it may be sufficient to just reduce your intake of these foods and consume them in moderation. Ask your doctor or dietitian for more advice.

Potassium Lowering Cooking Tips:

The way we cook vegetables and potatoes affects their potassium content.

- Vegetables and potatoes should be cut up into small pieces and boiled in plenty of water as this reduces their potassium content. After boiling throw the cooking water away. Do not use to make gravy or stock.
- Once boiled, vegetables and potatoes can be fried, roasted or added to casseroles.
- Try to avoid vegetables which have been cooked by steaming or microwaving. Try not to eat raw vegetables.

Reducing Your Intake of High Potassium Foods

Reduce Intake of:	Lower Potassium Alternatives:
FRUIT – Bananas, avocado, dried fruit (raisins, sultanas, prunes, dates etc)	Fruits should be limited to a maximum of 3 portions a day. A portion is 80g or about a handful e.g. one small apple, Clementine or about 10 grapes.
VEGETABLES – Vegetables which have not been boiled (i.e. steamed, stir fried or raw vegetables). Beetroot (fresh), tomato puree, sundried tomatoes.	2-3 small (80g) portions of other vegetables. Boil vegetables if possible. Limit salads to one small bowl per day.
STARCHY FOODS - Jacket/baked potatoes, oven/microwave/retail chips, manufactured potato products e.g. hash browns/potato waffles/frozen roast potato/potato wedges Unboiled cassava/yam/sweet potato/taro/plantain.	Boiled potatoes, potatoes that have been par-boiled then roasted/fried. Boiled cassava/yam/sweet potato/taro/plaintain. Pasta, rice, noodles, breads Have no more than one serving of potato/starchy vegetables per day.
SNACKS – Potato crisps/snacks, nuts, chocolate, fudge. Biscuits and cakes containing lots of nuts, dried fruit, chocolate.	Corn or maize based snacks, popcorn, mints, boiled / chew / jelly sweets, marshmallow, biscuits and cakes not containing dried fruit, nuts and chocolate.
DRINKS – Coffee, malted milk drinks (e.g. Ovaltine / Horlicks), drinking chocolate, cocoa, fruit and vegetable juices, smoothies, wine, beer, cider and stout. Limit milk to 2/3 pint per day or 1/3 pint milk + 1 pot yogurt per day.	Tea, herbal tea, squash/cordial, mineral water, flavoured water, fizzy drinks. Spirits are generally lower in potassium than other alcoholic drinks. Remember to keep within safe limits for alcohol intake.
SALT SUBSTITUTES (to avoid) – e.g. Lo-Salt, So-Lo, Reduced sodium salt	Other seasonings e.g. pepper, herbs, spices.

Keeping Your Diet Well Balanced

If you are following a low potassium diet for a long time you may be at risk of nutritional deficiencies. It is important that your diet remains balanced. You may find the information in this leaflet difficult to follow if you have a poor appetite or you are already following a special diet for another condition. Assessment by a Registered Dietitian who can provide personalised recommendations and review the overall balance of the diet is recommended.