

Potassium

A basic guide to lowering the potassium in your diet

Information for patients



You have been asked to follow a low potassium diet by your doctor. This booklet includes basic information regarding a low potassium diet. For more detailed information, please ask your doctor to refer you to the dietitian.

What is potassium?

Potassium is a mineral that is essential for life. It is found in our blood and food. It is important for the normal function of all nerves and muscles, including the heart. Potassium is present in most food and drinks; it has no taste or smell.

Why is the amount of potassium in my blood high?

The kidneys normally help to control the level of potassium in our blood. When the kidneys are not working properly, the level of potassium in the blood may become too high. This can be dangerous as it can affect the way the heart beats.

Other causes of abnormal potassium levels

Other factors may also cause an abnormal potassium level. These can include recent blood transfusions, some medications, constipation and poorly controlled diabetes.

If you are experiencing constipation or struggling to control your diabetes, seek further medical advice.

Other dietary requirements

You have been asked to follow a low potassium diet. However if you have diabetes, coeliac disease, are following a weight reducing diet or have other dietary needs it is important that these diets continue.

Foods to avoid which are high in potassium	Suitable alternatives
Potatoes	
Fried, oven, microwave or frozen chips, instant mashed potato, jacket potatoes, potato waffles and potato croquettes	Boiled or mashed potatoes; up to three small potatoes per day
Vegetables	
Baked beans, butter beans, chick peas, lentils, red kidney beans, haricot beans, mung beans, spinach, mushrooms, tinned tomatoes, tomato puree, Brussel sprouts and parsnips	French and green beans, carrots, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, leeks, swede, sweetcorn, onions, peas, pepper, mange tout, bean sprouts, courgette, celery, mixed vegetables, one small tomato per day, lettuce and cucumber
Fruit	
Apricots, bananas, damsons, rhubarb, grapes, cantaloupe melon, dried fruit (e.g. raisins and sultanas), blackberries, redcurrants, blackcurrants, avocado, cherries and star fruit	Apples, grapefruit, pear, peach, small orange, pineapple, strawberries, raspberries, kiwi fruit, lemon, mandarin, small nectarine, plums, tangerine, satsuma and tinned fruit in syrup or juice drained

Foods to avoid which are high in potassium	Suitable alternatives
Miscellaneous	
Spaghetti in tomato sauce Tomato sauce - limit to one teaspoon only Curry powder and Lo-Salt	Vinegar, pepper, herbs and spices
Drinks	
Coffee, cocoa, fruit juice, blackcurrant squash, Horlicks, Ovaltine, Bournvita, stout, red wine, cider, barley wine, liqueurs, red wine, sweet white wine and sweet sherry Limit your milk intake to ½ pint per day	Water, tea, orange or lemon squash, lemonade, cola drinks, 7-Up, Tango, Sprite, Lilt, soda and tonic water, spirits and dry white wine If diabetic, choose light, diet and no-added sugar options
Snacks	
Potato crisps, nuts, chocolate, liquorice, fudge, marzipan, peanut butter, cakes and biscuits containing chocolate, coconut, coffee and dried fruit	Maize snacks e.g. Skips, Monster Munch and Wotsits Sweets, mints and chewing gum Plain and cream cakes , Plain biscuits
Starchy foods	
Cereals containing dried fruit and nuts, All Bran, muesli, Fruit and Fibre, Sultana Bran, Bran Flakes, Nutrigrain, Weetos, Ready Brek, oatcakes and rye crispbread	Porridge, cornflakes, Weetabix, Rice Krispies, Cheerios, Sugar Puffs, Shredded Wheat, Shreddies, Special K and Frosties, Rice, pasta (e.g. macaroni and spaghetti), bread (all types), chapatis, plain naan, pittas, crumpets and cream crackers

Additional information on lowering your potassium

- Only have two small servings of vegetables each day i.e. two tablespoons equals one serving
- A small portion of salad may be used in place of one serving of vegetables. This may contain lettuce, cucumber, spring onion, pepper, radish and one small tomato (pickled onion and beetroot may be added in small amounts)
- Always boil your vegetables well, in plenty of water and discard the cooking water. Do not drink it or use it for making gravy, soups or stocks
- Avoid using a pressure cooker or microwave when cooking vegetables
- After boiling, potatoes can be chipped or roasted but not more than twice per week
- Limit your fruit to two portions per day. One portion of fruit is an apple or pear or a small bowl of tinned fruit e.g. two peach halves
- Rice, pasta and bread are low in potassium. They are suitable alternatives to potatoes. Yam, sweet potato or plantain can be eaten instead of potatoes if boiled well and are of a similar portion size
- Please continue with your current portion sizes of meat, fish, Quorn, tofu, cheese, eggs and yoghurt. If you are vegetarian, you may continue to eat pulses and lentils

Information contained in this booklet is correct at time of printing. Manufacturers are continually changing the ingredients of their products and altering portion sizes. These changes may affect the potassium content of these foods.

Personal Notes

A series of 20 horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

If you have any suggestions or comments regarding this leaflet please let your dietitian know.

The information contained within this leaflet is intended for your specific needs and should not be passed on to anyone else.

If you have any queries, please contact:

Dietitian

Contact Number



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