

# Potassium

A guide to lowering the potassium  
in your multi-cultural diet

Information for  
patients



You have been asked to follow a low potassium diet. This booklet has been designed to enable you to continue to enjoy your food whilst following a low potassium diet.

### **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.

**We are aiming to help keep your potassium between:**

.....

Potassium is found in all the food that we eat but it is particularly high in fruit, vegetables, potatoes and some herbs and spices. These guidelines will help you to lower your daily intake of potassium.

## Other causes of abnormal potassium levels

Other factors may also cause an abnormal potassium level. These can include recent blood transfusions, medication, muscle breakdown, 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. The dietitian will discuss this with you.

We do not recommend the purchase of over the counter multivitamins. Please do not hesitate to discuss this with the dietitian if you have any questions.

## Food labelling

Potassium is not listed under the nutritional values on food and drink labels. However you may want to use the ingredients list as a guide. The ingredients are listed in order of quantity, therefore should it list a high potassium food first you may wish to avoid it.

## Salt substitutes

In order to reduce the salt (sodium) content of foods, manufacturers are using salt substitutes. Salt substitutes including LoSalt (potassium chloride) and supermarket own brands are high in potassium. Therefore salt substitutes and foods containing these products should be avoided.

### *Example: Reduced salt baked beans*

Haricot beans, water, tomato puree, sugar, modified maize starch, **potassium chloride**, salt and sweetener.

## Preservatives

Preservatives such as potassium sorbate are often added to food and drinks such as cordials and squashes. This does not need to be avoided.

## Eating out and celebrations

It can be difficult to choose a meal when eating out or at a time of celebration, while keeping in mind your low potassium diet.

If you require further information about this ask your dietitian for guidance.

## When making curries

### Tomatoes

Tomatoes are high in potassium so limit the amount included in the base sauce to 60 g (2 oz) per person serving.

### Spices

Ginger, garlic, onion and green chillies are fine to include. Please refer to the spice guide on page 10, to decide on a lower potassium spice blend. If possible try to avoid turmeric, coriander powder, chilli powder and cayenne pepper, as they are very high in potassium.

### Vegetable ingredients

Choose the main vegetable ingredients from the low potassium vegetable list and limit or avoid using vegetables from the high potassium vegetable list (see page 8).

- Boiling vegetables before adding them to the curry sauce will lower the potassium content of your meal which will enable you to add some of the higher potassium content vegetables
- Do not use a microwave or pressure cooker to do this and always throw away the water they have been boiled in
- Canned vegetables are lower in potassium but higher in salt so try not to rely on them too often

### Potatoes and sweet potatoes

Potatoes and sweet potatoes are especially high in potassium.

- Pre-boiling the potatoes before adding them to curries will lower the potassium content
- Limit your portion size to 100 g (4 oz) per day

## Flours

If you need to add flours to thicken your curry sauce try corn flour, plain flour or rice flour. The lentil flours including besan and soya flour are high in potassium.

## Nuts, coconut and dried fruit

Try to avoid curries, rices or naan breads that contain nuts, dried fruit or coconut, as they will be higher in potassium.

## Cereals and starches

Serve curry with rice, chapattis or plain naan bread.

## Pickles and chutneys

These are often high in potassium and so are best taken sparingly e.g. 1 teaspoon.

## Protein foods

Protein foods include meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, pulses and meat substitutes e.g. Quorn and tofu. They can be high in potassium but are a valuable food source as they provide protein, vitamins and minerals. For this reason many are not restricted, however you may need guidance on portion sizes.

## Milk and dairy products

These foods are an important source of protein and calcium. They do contain potassium therefore you may need guidance on portion sizes.

<b>Recommended allowance</b>
<b>Milk and soya milk</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Up to ..... ml of milk is acceptable daily. This can be any type of fresh, UHT or soya milk</li><li>• Milk powder can be used as an alternative to milk, when following the manufacturers guidelines</li><li>• Avoid Coffee Mate. You can use Coffee Compliment</li><li>• Avoid all tinned milk (condensed or evaporated)</li><li>• Avoid coconut milk</li></ul>
<b>Yoghurts, fromage frais and yoghurt drinks</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You can include any type and have ..... 125g carton each week</li></ul>
<b>Cream</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All fresh cream can be used freely</li><li>• Double cream and water can be used as a substitute for milk</li></ul>
<b>Cheese</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All types can be taken freely</li><li>• Watch out for salt substitutes in the ingredients</li></ul>
<b>Milk puddings and ice cream</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limit milky puddings to twice per week</li><li>• Ice-cream can be eaten freely</li></ul>
<b>Fats and oils</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any type e.g. margarine, butter, cooking oils, suet, dripping and ghee can be used in small amounts</li><li>• We recommend the use of monounsaturated fats in small amounts e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil and olive-based spreads</li></ul>

## Vegetables

The following vegetables can be included in curry sauces if they are pre boiled first and the water they are boiled in is thrown away: Asparagus, cauliflower, courgette, broccoli, curly kale, mustard leaves, spinach, spring greens, mushrooms and pumpkin.

Low potassium vegetables	High potassium vegetables
Ash gourd Aubergine Baby sweetcorn Broccoli Bottle gourd Cabbage Carrots Fenugreek leaves Leeks Marrow Mixed vegetables (frozen) Onions Peas (frozen) Pepper, green Pepper, red Petit pois Ridge gourd Runner beans Sugar snap peas Swede Tinda Canned okra Canned kantola Canned karela Canned mushrooms Canned peas	Asparagus Brussels sprouts Cauliflower Courgette Curly kale Drumstick leaves + pods Fennel Kantola Karela Mushrooms Mustard leaves Okra Parsnips Potatoes Radish Spinach Sweet potatoes  Canned spinach Spinach puree Tomato puree



## Dhal and pulses

Some lentils are higher in potassium than others. Please refer to the table below to identify the lower potassium varieties.

- Dhal and pulse dishes made from the lower potassium pulses can be safely included as a vegetarian meal
- Generally split lentils are lower in potassium than whole lentil varieties

Low potassium choices	High potassium choices
Black gram Chick peas Mung beans Red split lentils	Black eye beans Butter beans Green and brown lentils Pigeon peas Red kidney beans Soya beans

## Side salads

If you wish to enjoy a small side salad with your meal then choose three options from this list:

- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6 small lettuce leaves      | 1 tablespoon sweetcorn   |
| 2 slices of a medium tomato | Kernels                  |
| 7 thin slices of cucumber   | 3 rings of yellow pepper |
| ½ celery stick              | 4 rings of red pepper    |
| ½ raw apple                 | 5 rings of green pepper  |
| 2 spring onions             | 2 slices of pickled      |
| beetroot                    |                          |
| 3 small radishes            | 1 oz raw cabbage         |
| 1 tablespoon grated carrot  | 1 slice of raw onion     |

Salads can be dressed with olive oil, vinegar, vinaigrette, mayonnaise or lemon juice.

## Herbs and spices

Herbs and spices will also add to your overall potassium intake. The measurements are given as per person serving i.e. multiply the recommended amount by the number of portions the dish is estimated to provide.

*Example: 2 teaspoons of garam masala can be added to a curry to feed a family of four*

Low (use freely)	Medium (½ tsp)	High (¼ tsp)
Bay leaf	Anise seeds	Amchoor powder
Black pepper	Cayenne pepper	Chilli powder
Cardamom	Cumin seeds	Coconut powder
(ground)	Curry powder	Coriander powder
Cinnamon (ground)	Garam masala	Fennel seeds
Cloves (dried)	Garlic powder	Groundnuts
Coriander leaves	Mint (dried)	Molasses
(fresh)	Parsley (fresh)	Paprika
Fenugreek seeds	Poppy seeds	Parsley (dried)
Garlic (fresh)	Red chilli	Turmeric powder
Ginger (fresh / dried)		
Green chilli		
Lemon		
Mint (fresh)		
Mustard seeds		
Nutmeg (ground)		
Rose water		
Saffron		
Tamarind pulp		
Vinegar		
White pepper		

**tsp = tablespoon**

- Turmeric is mainly a food colourant so try to limit or avoid using it as it is high in potassium
- Fresh herbs tend to be lower in potassium so try to use these in preference to dried herbs e.g. use fresh coriander rather than coriander powder
- Green chillies are lower in potassium than red chillies so try to use these in preference
- If you want to add extra heat to a dish try adding fresh chilli when you fry your onions, rather than chilli powder

## Starchy foods

These foods are an essential part of the diet and should be included with every meal. They provide us with energy and fibre as well as minerals. Some starchy foods, for example potatoes and sweet potatoes are high in potassium; please see page 5 for information regarding portion sizes.

Low potassium foods	High potassium foods
<p><b>Breads</b> All types e.g. wholemeal, white, granary, soda bread, pitta breads, bagels, croissants and English muffins</p>	<p>Popadoms Avoid bread containing nuts, dried fruit, sweet potato and coconut</p>
<p><b>Other starchy foods</b> Chapatis, plain naan, paratha, corn or tortilla wraps, crumpets, pikelets, scotch pancakes, Yorkshire puddings, dumplings, cream crackers and crispbreads, cous cous, pasta, rice and noodles</p>	<p>Tinned spaghetti in tomato sauce and tinned ravioli in tomato sauce</p>
<p><b>Breakfast cereals</b> Porridge made with water or milk from allowance Cornflakes, Rice Krispies, Cheerios, Sugar Puffs, Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Shreddies, Frosties, Start, Special K, Ricicles, Honey Smacks, Crunchy Nut Cornflakes, Puffed Wheat and Grape Nuts</p>	<p>Breakfast cereals containing nuts or dried fruit e.g. muesli, Fruit and Fibre, Weetabix Minis, Sultana Bran, All Bran, Raisin Splits and Jordans Crunch  Ready Brek</p>

## Fruit, nuts and seeds

Fruit, nuts and seeds are an important source of vitamins and minerals as well as fibre. However, they are also a source of potassium.

Below is a list of fresh, tinned, stewed fruit and fruit juice. The quantities are equal to one portion. We recommend limiting your fruit, nuts and seeds to ..... portions each day.

Fresh fruit	Tinned fruit
1 medium apple 1 medium pear 2 medium clementine 2 small tangerines 5 slices fresh lemon 2 small satsumas 1 small orange 5 passion fruit 1 medium peach 1 slice fresh pineapple 9 fresh strawberries 25 fresh raspberries 1 medium slice watermelon 20 blackberries 12 raw cherries ½ fresh grapefruit 1 small guava 1 small Sharon fruit 15 grapes 1 medium kiwi fruit 1 small nectarine 2 small plums 150 g punnet of blueberries	12 canned grapefruit segments 7 slices tinned peaches 4 halves tinned pears 4 tablespoons of: fruit cocktail fruit pie filling mandarins plums strawberries lychees mango 3 tablespoons of: gooseberries guavas papaya rhubarb <b>Stewed fruit</b> 4 tablespoons of: apple blackberries gooseberries 3 tablespoons of: plums rhubarb

### Fresh fruit juice (please choose unsweetened fruit juices)

300 ml unsweetened pineapple juice  
300 ml unsweetened grape juice  
200 ml unsweetened cranberry juice  
150 ml apple juice  
100 ml orange juice  
80 ml pomegranate juice  
80 ml passion fruit juice  
80 ml tomato juice

The following fruits are very high in potassium and can be included, however the portion size is small.

1 small apricot	1 dried apricot
½ small banana	2 raw dates
2 small slices of mango	1 dried date
½ naseberry (sapodilla)	1 small dried fig
¼ avocado	1½ tbsp canned prunes
½ slice papaya	1 tsp raisins
1 small slice galia melon (100 g)	
1 medium slice cantaloupe or honeydew melon (75 g)	

The following nuts and seeds are equivalent to one portion.

10 almonds	20 g hazelnuts
7 brazil nuts	18 macadamia nuts
20 cashew nuts	20 peanuts
3 chestnuts	5 pecan nuts
20 g peanut butter	15 pistachio nuts
1 tbsp sunflower seeds	1 tbsp sesame seeds
1 tbsp tahini	6 walnut halves

**tbsp = tablespoon    tsp = teaspoon**

**Please avoid starfruit.**

## Drinks

Low potassium drinks	High potassium drinks
<p><b>Soft drinks</b> Lemonade, Tango, orange &amp; lemon squash, Lucozade, 7- Up, Sprite and Lilt Mixers such as tonic water, bitter lemon, dry ginger and soda water</p>	<p>To include fruit juice see fruit portion information (page 14) High Juice squash, blackcurrant squash and coconut containing drinks should be avoided Avoid juices containing mango juice, soursop, starfruit, apricot and coconut milk</p>
<p><b>Alcohol</b> Dry white wine, sparkling wine, lager, bitter (mild), gin, brandy, vodka, whisky, rum, Baileys and Vermouth <b>Try to keep your alcohol intake to within the recommended limits</b></p>	<p>Stout, strong ale, cider, barley wine, liqueurs, red wine, sweet white wine, sweet sherry and alcopops</p>
<p><b>Hot beverages</b> Tea, fruit teas, green tea Limit to 1 cup of coffee a day Camp coffee and Chai (made with milk from daily allowance)</p>	<p>Horlicks, Ovaltine, Bournvita, cocoa, drinking chocolate, Bovril and Oxo</p>
<p><b>Nutritional supplements</b> Your dietitian will discuss appropriate supplements if required</p>	<p>Nourishment, Nutriment, Complan and Build Up</p>

**If diabetic, please choose no-added sugar, light or diet varieties of drinks.**

## Snacks and desserts

This group of foods contain a lot of fat and sugar. These foods can be eaten freely, unless advised differently by your dietitian. If you have diabetes, remember to follow your diabetic diet.

Low potassium foods	High potassium foods
<p><b>Cakes</b> Sponge cakes, including lemon drizzle cake, lemon curd finger rolls and fairy cakes Victoria sponge with cream, jam and buttercream fillings Madeira cake, bulla, Battenberg, treacle tart, jam tarts, jam swiss roll, doughnuts, plain scones Danish pastries (with no dried fruit or nuts) and plain rusks</p>	<p>Avoid cakes containing dried fruit, nuts, chocolate, marzipan and coconut</p> <p>Cassava pone and coconut ice (Sugar Cake)</p>



<p><b>Biscuits</b>  Plain e.g. rich tea, digestive and HobNobs  Cream filled: custard creams and jammy dodgers  Shortbread and sponge fingers</p>	<p>Avoid all biscuits with chocolate, nuts, dried fruit and coconut e.g. macaroons, coconut tarts, marzipan, chocolate slices, peanut cookies and almond slices</p>
<p><b>Low potassium foods</b></p>	<p><b>High potassium foods</b></p>
<p><b>Puddings</b>  Pavlova, sponge pudding (syrup, strawberry jam), lemon meringue pie, corn pudding, apple or plum crumble, apple pie or tinned fruit and cream</p>	<p>Sweet potato pudding  Milk pudding made with condensed or evaporated milk or that contains nuts, dried fruit or coconut  Remember to include stewed fruit or tinned fruit within your fruit allowance</p>
<p><b>Sweets</b>  Boiled sweets, wine gums, mints, chewing gum and marshmallows</p>	<p>Chocolate, toffee, fudge, liquorice and fruit gums  Carob, sev, halva and burfi</p>

## Chocolate

The following brand names are lower in potassium than others. It is safe to choose **one** from the list below each day, unless advised differently by the dietitian.

- Blue Riband
- Kit Kat (two finger, 22 g)
- 2 Jaffa cakes
- Creme eggs (39 g)
- Mars bar (fun size, 19 g)
- Twix (1 single finger, 28 g)
- 4 cream filled chocolates (e.g. Quality Street, Roses)

*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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