



What You Need To Know About A Low Potassium Diet



Patient Name:
Dietitian Name:
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Introduction

The diet advice in this booklet has been developed by experienced registered dietitians to help individuals with high blood potassium levels.

What is potassium?

Potassium is a mineral which is found naturally in many foods. Some potassium is needed as part of a healthy diet. It is required to ensure healthy functioning muscle, including your heart muscle.

Your potassium level should be mmols/l

Why is the amount of potassium in my blood too high?

The level of potassium in your blood is usually controlled by the kidneys. When your kidneys are not working properly the potassium level in your blood may rise. It is quite common for people with kidney problems to have too much potassium in the blood. Your bowels also remove some potassium, so if you are constipated, your blood potassium level may also rise.

Why do I need to control the amount of potassium in my blood?

Too much potassium can be dangerous as it affects the rhythm of your heart and can cause a heart attack if levels are very high.

Can I tell if my potassium is high?

No. There is no reliable way, other than a blood test, to tell if your potassium is high.

What should I do to control my blood potassium levels?

There are 3 things you can do:

- Follow a low potassium diet
- Ensure regular bowel habits
- If you are on dialysis, keep to your scheduled sessions

How do I follow a Low Potassium Diet?

This leaflet explains which foods are high in potassium and need to be limited, and which foods are suitable alternatives. Your dietitian will give you individualised advice on the changes you need to make.



Carbohydrate (Starchy foods)

Carbohydrates, also known as starchy foods, provide energy, vitamins and fibre. Some starchy foods such as bread, rice and pasta are low in potassium and can be eaten freely. However, some starchy vegetables like potato, sweet potato, cassava and yam are particularly high in potassium and need to be limited in the diet.

Potato

150g (5oz) potato (3 egg size potatoes) are allowed daily.

This may be swapped for 150g boiled sweet potato / yam / cassava / taro.

Choose

Boiled potato / sweet potato / yam / cassava / taro

Boiled and then roasted or fried potato / sweet potato / yam / cassava / taro

Mashed potato (not instant)

Avoid

Baked / jacket potato / sweet potato etc

Frozen / oven / microwave / retail chips

Manufactured potato products e.g. hash browns, potato waffles, potato wedges, frozen roast potatoes

Steamed potatoes / sweet potato / yam / cassava / taro

Instant mashed potato

Rice, Pasta and other Grains

Pasta, rice, noodles, couscous, pastry, Yorkshire puddings and dumplings are low in potassium.

Breads

Choose

White, granary, wholemeal breads and rolls

Pitta bread

Tortilla wraps

Bagels

Crumpets

Croissants

English muffin

Avoid

Breads containing nuts, seeds or dried fruits

Naan bread (limit to ½ Naan (80g) per day)

Breakfast Cereals

Choose

Cereals that are free from bran, dried fruit, nuts and chocolate such as:

Weetabix

Shredded Wheat

Shreddies

Porridge

Cornflakes / Frosties

Special K

Rice Krispies

Cheerios

Avoid

Cereals containing bran, dried fruit, nuts and chocolate such as:

Muesli

All Bran

Sultana Bran

Fruit and Fibre

Bran Buds

Grape Nuts

Weetos / Choco Hoops

Cooking methods

The way you cook your food (especially potatoes and vegetables) can affect its potassium content. When they are boiled, some of the potassium is lost into the cooking water and this reduces the potassium content of the food. For this reason, you should:

- Boil vegetables / potatoes in plenty of water and make sure they are well cooked. Throw away this water after use. Do not use this water to make soups, gravy, curries or casseroles.
- Boil potatoes and vegetables before frying / roasting or adding to casseroles or curries.
- Peel potatoes before boiling if possible.

When little or no water is used to cook these foods, most of the potassium stays in the food. For this reason, you should:

- Avoid using a steamer, microwave or pressure cooker for cooking vegetables and potatoes. NB you can re-heat vegetables in the microwave if they have already been boiled.
- Where possible avoid stir-frying or roasting (unless vegetables / potatoes have been boiled first).



Fruits & Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are an important source of vitamins, minerals and fibre. However they all contain potassium, though some are higher than others. If you choose to have the lower potassium varieties then you can eat more of them. It is good to eat a variety of fruit and vegetables rather than using up your entire allowance on one type. The table below shows how many portions of fruit and vegetable you can have each day:

| | |
|-----------|--|
| | Low potassium – 6 portions |
| Or | Moderate potassium – 4 portions |
| Or | High potassium – 3 portions |
| Or | Low potassium – 3 portions + Moderate potassium – 2 portions |
| Or | Low potassium – 2 portions + High potassium – 2 portions |
| Or | Low potassium – 1 portion + Moderate potassium – 3 portions |
| Or | Moderate potassium – 2 portions + High potassium – 1 portion |
| Or | Moderate potassium – 1 portion + High potassium – 2 portions |
| Or | High potassium – 1 portion + moderate potassium – 1 portion + low potassium – 2 portions |
| Or | High potassium – 1 portion + moderate potassium – 2 portions + low potassium – 1 portion |

Portions

A portion of fruit is 80g (3oz). This is about a handful of small fruit (strawberries, raspberries, grapes etc) or a portion of fruit about the size of a small apple, peach or a tangerine. For vegetables, an 80g portion is approximately 2 heaped serving spoons.

80g portions are quite small. If you have a large apple for instance, it may weigh about 160g (6oz) so this should be counted as 2 portions.

You can often get an idea of how much something weighs by looking at the packaging eg 250g punnet of fruit would contain about 3 portions.

If you enjoy eating plenty of fruits and vegetables the above guidelines will help you to continue to enjoy variety in your diet and meet your “5 a day”.

However if you do not normally eat large quantities of fruits and vegetables your dietitian may feel you can continue to eat your usual quantities of these foods. You may be given some more general guidelines such as to mainly choose those from the low and moderate groups and have the high ones only occasionally.

Individual Guidance on Fruit and Vegetable Intake



Vegetables

| Low potassium | Moderate potassium | Higher potassium |
|--|---|---|
| Beansprouts - raw | Asparagus - boiled | Artichoke (edible part) - boiled |
| Cabbage - boiled | Aubergine – fried | Baked beans |
| Carrots - boiled | Beetroot - pickled | Blackeye beans (dried) - boiled |
| Cauliflower - boiled | Broad beans - fresh or canned and boiled | Brussel sprouts - boiled |
| Chickpeas - canned | Broccoli - boiled | Butter beans - canned |
| Corn on the cob - boiled | Carrots – raw | Butternut squash – baked |
| Cucumber – raw | Celery - boiled | Cabbage – raw |
| Gherkins - pickled | Chicory – raw | Celeriac - boiled |
| Green/French beans -canned | Coleslaw - raw | Celery – raw |
| Leeks - boiled | Courgette - boiled | Chickpeas (dried) - boiled |
| Marrow – boiled | Curly kale - boiled | Chilli beans - canned |
| Mixed vegetables - frozen | Green/French beans - boiled | Courgette – raw |
| Mushrooms - canned | Kohlrabi - boiled | Fennel - boiled |
| Mustard and cress – raw | Lentils red (dried) - boiled | Kidney beans - canned |
| Olives – canned/jar | Lettuce – raw | Lentils green/brown (dried) - boiled |
| Onions - boiled or pickled | Mange tout – boiled/raw/fried | Mung beans (dried) - boiled |
| Sugar snap peas – raw/boiled/stir-fried | Mixed vegetables (canned) - boiled | Mushrooms – raw/fried |
| Peas - frozen or canned | Mooli – raw | Okra – boiled |
| Pepper red or green – raw | Onions - raw | Onions - fried |
| Pumpkin – boiled | Peas - mushy | Parsnip - boiled |
| Runner beans - boiled | Pepper yellow – raw | Split peas prepared |
| Squash spaghetti type - boiled | Potato salad (retail) | Raddiccio – raw |
| Swede - boiled | Radish – raw | Spinach (frozen) - boiled |
| Water chestnuts - canned | Salsify - boiled | Spring onions – raw edible part |
| | Shallots – raw | Tomato – raw |
| | Spinach - boiled | |
| | Spring greens - boiled | |
| | Squash (all summer ones) - boiled | |
| | Sweetcorn (baby/canned/frozen) - boiled | |
| | Tomato canned – whole contents | |
| | Turnip - boiled | |
| | Watercress - raw | |

Tip:

In addition to your fruit and vegetable allowance, you could choose to have a meal made with a tomato based sauce, provided you don't have potatoes that day as well. For example you could serve a tomato based dish with pasta, rice, noodles, couscous or on a pizza base. One third a 400g tin of tomatoes or one serving of a ready made sauce would be equivalent to your daily potato allowance.

Very High Potassium Vegetables – To Avoid:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Aduki beans | Pak choi |
| Artichoke (Jerusalem) | Pinto beans |
| Bamboo shoots (canned) | Soya beans |
| Beetroot (fresh - boiled/raw) | Spinach (raw) |
| Chard, Swiss | Tomato puree |
| Endive | Sundried tomatoes |
| Mushrooms (dried) | |

Fruit

| Low potassium | Moderate potassium | Higher potassium |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Apple | Apricot (canned) | Apricot (fresh) |
| Blueberries | Blackberries | Blackcurrant (stewed) |
| Cherries (canned) | Blackcurrant (canned) | Damson |
| Clementine | Cherries (fresh) | Gooseberries (raw) |
| Cranberries (raw) | Fig (fresh) | Grapes |
| Fruit cocktail (canned) | Kumquats | Greengage |
| Fruit pie filling | Mango (flesh only) | Guava |
| Gooseberries (stewed) | Melon (flesh only) | Kiwi |
| Grapefruit (fresh or canned)* | Papaya (flesh only) | Loganberries |
| Guava (canned) | Peaches (canned in juice) | Physalis (cape gooseberry) |
| Lemon | Pineapple (fresh) | Plums |
| Lime | Plums (stewed) | Prunes (canned) |
| Loganberries (canned) | Pomegranate (flesh only) | Redcurrants |
| Lychees (fresh – weighed with stone or canned) | Quince | Rhubarb |
| Mandarins (canned) | Raspberries | Sharon fruit |
| Mango (canned in syrup) | Strawberries | White currants |
| Mixed peel | | |
| Nectarine (weighed with stone) | | |
| Orange | | |
| Papaya (canned) | | |
| Passion fruit | | |
| Peach (fresh weighed with stone or canned in syrup) | | |
| Pear (fresh or canned) | | |
| Pineapple (canned) | | |
| Plums (canned) | | |
| Pomelo | | |
| Raspberries (canned) | | |
| Rhubarb (canned) | | |
| Satsuma | | |
| Strawberries (canned) | | |
| Tangerine | | |

- Star fruit may cause dangerous side effects in renal patients, it is therefore recommended that you avoid this.
- * You may be advised not to have grapefruit if you are taking certain medications.

Very High Potassium Fruits – To Avoid:

Apricot (dried)

Avocado

Banana

Blackcurrant (raw)

Coconut

Currants (dried)

Dates

Dried mixed fruit

Fig (dried)

Prunes (dried)

Raisins

Sultanas

Milk and dairy products

Milk and dairy products play an important role within our diet as they contain essential nutrients such as calcium, which is needed for healthy bones, and protein which is needed for growth and repair of tissues. However milk is quite high in potassium so should be limited.

Milk should be limited to ½ pint per day. If you wish to have other milk products these may be taken in place of your milk allowance as follows. You may choose a total of 3 points per day. For example: milk on cereal and a small pot of yoghurt = 3 points

| Milk Product | Points |
|--|---------------|
| <i>Half a pint of milk*</i> | 3 |
| <i>Glass of milk (200ml)</i> | 2 |
| <i>Rice pudding (200g)</i> | 2 |
| <i>Small pot of yoghurt (125g)</i> | 2 |
| <i>Milk on cereal (100ml)</i> | 1 |
| <i>Greek style yoghurt (2 tablespoons)</i> | 1 |
| <i>Custard (2 tablespoons)</i> | 1 |
| <i>Ice-cream (2 scoops)</i> | 1 |
| <i>Crème-caramel (90g pot)</i> | 1 |

*This includes cow's, sheep's, goat and soya milk

The following milk products are low in potassium and may be eaten freely in addition to your milk allowance:

All types cheese
All types of cream

Crème fraiche
Rice/oat milk

Meat, Fish and Alternatives

Protein is important for building and maintaining muscle. Your dietitian may advise you on the appropriate amount of protein foods that you should have.

Choose

Meat and poultry – all types
Fish and seafood – all types
Eggs
Quorn
Tofu

Avoid

Nuts
Seeds

Pulses:

Pulses can be eaten as part of your vegetable allowances. You can also take additional pulses in place of meat or fish. A portion of baked beans, lentils, chickpeas or kidney beans can be taken in place of a portion of meat or fish as a vegetarian meal.

Snacks and Sweet Foods

These foods are generally high in energy (calories) but vary in potassium content.

Savoury Snacks

Choose

Maize / corn based snacks e.g. Wotsits,
Monster Munch, Tortilla chips
Rice based snacks e.g. Snack-a-Jacks, rice
cakes
Breadsticks
Plain popcorn
Pretzels

Avoid

Potato crisps
Potato snacks e.g. Hula Hoops, Quavers etc
Vegetable crisps
Nuts and seeds
Bombay mix
Twiglets

Many savoury snacks are high in salt so should be included in moderation within your diet.

Biscuits and cakes

Choose

Rich tea / Marie / Digestives / Ginger biscuits
Short bread
Iced biscuits
Cream / jam filled biscuits
Crackers
Wafers
Sponge cake / Battenberg / Madeira
Fancy iced cakes
Cream horns / Doughnuts
Swiss roll
Jam tarts

Avoid

All cakes, biscuits or cereal bars etc
containing dried fruit, nuts or chocolate

Confectionary

Choose

Boiled sweets
Chewy sweets
Jelly sweets
Fruit pastilles
Marshmallow
Mints
Turkish delight
Candied popcorn

Avoid

Chocolate
Toffee
Fudge
Liquorice
Carob
Confectionary containing dried fruit/nuts

Puddings

Choose

Lemon meringue pie
Jam / treacle pudding / treacle tart
Fruit pie / crumble (using fruit from your
allowance)
Pavlova (using fruit from your allowance)
Cheesecake (using fruit from your allowance)

Avoid

All puddings containing dried fruit, nuts or
chocolate

If you have diabetes then you will need to limit your intake of sugary foods and drinks.

Drinks & alcohol

If you are on a fluid allowance, ensure that you include all fluid intake within this.

Non-alcoholic drinks

Choose

Water, tonic water, soda water, flavoured water
Cordials, Squash
Barley water
Tea – all types
Camp coffee
Fizzy drinks – lemonade, Lucozade etc
Red Bull

Avoid

Fruit juices
Hi Juice squashes
Fruit smoothies
Vegetable juices
Coffee
Drinking chocolate, cocoa, malted drinks (Ovaltine, Horlicks etc)

Alcohol

The government recommends that men should not drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol per day, and women should not drink more than 2-3 units of alcohol per day. You should avoid alcohol if you have been advised to do so by your doctor.

Choose

Spirits e.g. vodka, rum, gin, whiskey

Avoid/Limit

Beer and lager
Stout
Cider
Wine
Champagne / sparkling wine
Sherry
Vermouth
Port

If your potassium levels are well controlled you may include some beer/wine etc. See treat section below for more details.

Fats and Oils

Fats and oils are low in potassium and high in energy (calories). Those marked ♥ are better for your heart

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Monounsaturated fats ♥ | Olive oil, rapeseed oil, olive oils based spreads |
| Polyunsaturated fats ♥ | Sunflower, soya, corn oils and margarines made from these oils |
| Saturated fats | Butter, cream, lard |

Miscellaneous Foods

Choose

Herbs, spices, pepper
Garlic
Vinegar
Mayonnaise / salad cream
Mustard
Jam / marmalade
Honey
Lemon curd
Golden syrup
Horseradish
Chilli sauce
Curry powder
Mint sauce
Pickle
Apple sauce
Gravy granules/powder

Avoid

Black treacle
Peanut butter
Soup
Tomato ketchup
Tomato puree
Brown sauce
Marmite/Bovril/Vegemite
Chocolate spread

Salt Substitutes

Salt substitutes e.g. Lo-Salt, So-Lo, Low Sodium Salt contain potassium in place of sodium. It is important that salt substitutes are avoided.



Treats

If your potassium level is well controlled you may include item(s) per day from the list below as a treat. The following items in the portions specified contain similar amounts of potassium.

1 teaspoon instant coffee
100ml filter coffee
2 teaspoons Drinking chocolate / Horlicks / Ovaltine
50ml Fruit juice

100ml White / Rose wine
100ml Champagne / Sparkling wine
75ml Red wine
½ pint Lager / Bitter
100ml Sherry
200ml Vermouth

2 squares Chocolate
1 Cadbury's Crème Egg
1 finger Twix
2 finger KitKat
1 Milky Way
1 fun size Mars Bar



Action Plan / Notes
