



Potassium Diet

What is potassium and why is it important to you?

Potassium is a mineral found in many of the foods you eat. It plays a role in keeping your heartbeat regular and your muscles working right. It is the job of healthy kidneys to keep the right amount of potassium in your body. However, when your kidneys are not healthy, you often need to limit certain foods that can increase the potassium in your blood to a dangerous level. You may feel some weakness, numbness and tingling if your potassium is at a high level. If your potassium becomes too high, it can cause an irregular heartbeat or a heart attack.

What is a safe level of potassium in my blood?



Green Light = 3.5 - 5.0

Caution Light = 5.1 - 6.0

Red Light = higher than 6.0

Ask your doctor or dietitian about your monthly blood potassium level and enter it here:

How can I keep my potassium level from getting too high?

You should limit foods that are high in potassium. Your renal dietitian will help you plan your diet so you are getting the right amount of potassium.

Eat a variety of foods but in moderation.

If you want to include some high potassium vegetable in your diet, leach them before using. Leaching is a process by which some potassium can be pulled out of the vegetable. Instructions for leaching selected high potassium vegetables can be found at the end of this fact sheet. Check with your dietitian on the amount of leached high potassium vegetables that can be safely included in your diet.

Do not drink or use the liquid from canned fruits and vegetables, or the juices from cooked meat.

Remember that almost all foods have some potassium. The size of the serving is very important. A large amount of a low potassium food can turn into a high- potassium food.

If you are on dialysis, be sure to get all the treatment or exchanges prescribed to you.

Avoid these foods at ALL times:

Dried Peas & Beans	Baked Squash	Catsup
Soup Beans	Raw or Fried Potatoes	Chili Sauce
Nuts	Baked Beans	Salt Substitute
Soybeans	Lima Beans	Sunflower Seeds
Avocado	Whole Wheat Bread &	Vegetable Juice Cocktail
Licorice	Cereals	Regular Stews &
Malted Milk Powder	Bran	Vegetable Soups
“Gatorade”	Pumpernickle	Instant Tea Mixes
Fruit Punch	Granolas	
Baked Potatoes (White & Sweet)	Oatmeal	
	Molasses	

Avoid these foods until your potassium level is acceptable. Then, only eat in small portions.

Chocolate & Carob	Rhubarb	French Fries
Honeydew &	Apricots	Fresh Peaches
Cantaloupe	Bananas	Fresh Pears
Fruit Cocktail	Coconut	Fresh Plums
Oranges & Orange Juice	Dates	Raisins
Grapefruit Juice	Figs	Dried Fruits
Prunes & Prune Juice	Nectarines	Tomatoes & Tomato
Greens	Pumpkin	Sauces
Broccoli	Yams	Potatoes (Unless
Brussel Sprouts	Spinach	Specially Prepared)

- Limit other fruits and vegetables to 5 ½ cup servings a day TOTAL.
 - Limit Meat to 5 ounces a day.
 - Limit Milk to ½ cup a day.
 - Limit perked coffee to 1 cup a day.
- ✗ Do not steam or pan-fry vegetables.
- ✓ Cook Vegetables in large amount of water.
 - ✓ Cook Vegetables and discard water before adding vegetables to soups, stews or roasts.

How do I get some of the potassium out of my favorite high-potassium vegetables?

The process of leaching will help pull potassium out of some high-potassium vegetables. It is important to remember that leaching will not pull all of the potassium out of the vegetable. You must still limit the amount of leached high-potassium vegetables you eat.

Ask your dietitian about the amount of leached vegetables that you can safely have in your diet.

How to leach vegetables.

For Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes, Carrots, Beets, and Rutabagas:

1. Peel and place the vegetable in cold water so they won't darken.
2. Slice vegetable 1/8 inch thick.
3. Rinse in warm water for a few seconds.
4. Soak for a minimum of two hours in warm water. Use ten times the amount of water to the amount of vegetables. If soaking longer, change the water every four hours.
5. Rinse under warm water again for a few seconds.
6. Cook vegetable with five times the amount of water to the amount of vegetable.

For Squash, Mushrooms, Cauliflower, and Frozen Greens:

1. Allow frozen vegetable to thaw to room temperature and drain.
2. Rinse fresh or frozen vegetables in warm water for a few seconds.
3. Soak for a minimum of two hours in warm water. Use ten times the amount of water to the amount of vegetables. If soaking longer, change the water every four hours.
4. Rinse under warm water again for a few seconds.
5. Cook the usual way, but with five times the amount of water to the amount of vegetable.

References:

Bowes & Church Food Values of Portions Commonly Used, 17th Ed., Pennington, JA, Lippincott, 1998.

Diet Guide for Patients with Kidney Disease, Renal Interest Group-Kansas City Dietetic Association, 1990.

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