

**A TO Z HEALTH GUIDE**

# Potassium and Your CKD 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?

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

If it is 3.5-5.0.....You are in the **SAFE** zone

If it is 5.1-6.0.....You are in the **CAUTION** zone

If it is higher than 6.0.....You are in the **DANGER** zone

## 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.

## What is a normal amount of potassium intake per day for the average healthy individual?

A normal amount of potassium in a typical diet of a healthy American is about 3500 to 4500 milligrams per day. A potassium restricted diet is typically about 2000 milligrams per day. Your physician or dietitian will advise you as to the specific level of restriction you need based on your individual health. A kidney dietitian is trained to help you make modifications to your diet in order to prevent complications for kidney disease.

## What foods are high in potassium (greater than 200 milligrams per portion)?

The following table lists foods that are high in potassium. The portion size is ½ cup unless otherwise stated. **Please be sure to check portion sizes.** While all the foods on this list are high in potassium, some are higher than others.

### High-Potassium Foods

| Fruits                                      | Vegetables               | Other Foods   |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| Apricot, raw (2 medium)<br>dried (5 halves) | Acorn Squash             | Bran/Bran products  |
| Avocado (¼ whole)                           | Artichoke                | Chocolate (1.5-2 ounces)  |
| Banana (½ whole)                            | Bamboo Shoots            | Granola   |
| Cantaloupe                                  | Baked Beans              | Milk, all types (1 cup)   |
| Dates (5 whole)                             | Butternut Squash         | Molasses (1 Tablespoon)   |
| Dried fruits                                | Refried Beans            | Nutritional Supplements:<br>Use only under the<br>direction of your doctor<br>or dietitian. |
| Figs, dried                                 | Beets, fresh then boiled |   |
| Grapefruit Juice                            | Black Beans              |   |
| Honeydew                                    | Broccoli, cooked         | Nuts and Seeds (1 ounce)  |
| Kiwi (1 medium)                             | Brussels Sprouts         | Peanut Butter (2 tbs.)  |
| Mango(1 medium)                             | Chinese Cabbage          | Salt Substitutes/Lite Salt  |
| Nectarine(1 medium)                         | Carrots, raw             | Salt Free Broth   |
| Orange(1 medium)                            | Dried Beans and Peas     | Yogurt  |
| Orange Juice                                | Greens, except Kale      | Snuff/Chewing Tobacco   |

|                       |                                    |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Papaya (½ whole)      | Hubbard Squash                     |
| Pomegranate (1 whole) | Kohlrabi                           |
| Pomegranate Juice     | Lentils                            |
| Prunes                | Legumes                            |
| Prune Juice           | White Mushrooms,<br>cooked (½ cup) |
| Raisins               | Okra                               |
|                       | Parsnips                           |
|                       | Potatoes, white and<br>sweet       |
|                       | Pumpkin                            |
|                       | Rutabagas                          |
|                       | Spinach, cooked                    |
|                       | Tomatoes/Tomato<br>products        |
|                       | Vegetable Juices                   |

## What foods are low in potassium?

The following table list foods which are low in potassium. **A portion is ½ cup** unless otherwise noted. **Eating more than 1 portion can make a lower potassium food into a higher potassium food.**

### Low-Potassium Foods

| Fruits                    | Vegetables   | Other Foods                                       |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Apple (1 medium)          | Alfalfa sprouts  | Rice  |
| Apple Juice               | Asparagus (6 spears raw)                                       | Noodles   |
| Applesauce                | Beans, green or wax<br>Broccoli (raw or cooked<br>from frozen) | Pasta   |
| Apricots, canned in juice | Cabbage, green and red<br>Carrots, cooked                      | Bread and bread<br>products (Not Whole<br>Grains) |
| Blackberries              | Cauliflower  | Cake: angel, yellow                               |

|   |                                    |  |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Blueberries                             | Celery (1 stalk)                   | Coffee: <b>limit to 8 ounces</b>               |
| Cherries                                | Corn, fresh (½ ear) frozen (½ cup) | Pies without chocolate or high potassium fruit |
| Cranberries                             | Cucumber                           | Cookies without nuts or chocolate              |
| Fruit Cocktail                          | Eggplant                           | Tea: <b>limit to 16 ounces</b>                 |
| Grapes                                  | Kale                               |  |
| Grape Juice                             | Lettuce                            |  |
| Grapefruit (½ whole)                    | Mixed Vegetables                   |  |
| Mandarin Oranges                        | White Mushrooms, raw (½ cup)       |  |
| Peaches, fresh (1 small) canned (½ cup) | Onions                             |  |
| Pears, fresh (1 small) canned (½ cup)   | Parsley                            |  |
| Pineapple                               | Peas, green                        |  |
| Pineapple Juice                         | Peppers                            |  |
| Plums (1 whole)                         | Radish                             |  |
| Raspberries                             | Rhubarb                            |  |
| Strawberries                            | Water Chestnuts, canned            |  |
| Tangerine (1 whole)                     | Watercress                         |  |
| Watermelon ( <b>limit to 1 cup</b> )    | Yellow Squash                      |  |
|   | Zucchini Squash                    |  |

## 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, Winter Squash, 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.

**Read more about Potassium and Your CKD Diet.**

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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