



Department of Renal Medicine

Patient Dietary Advice – Following a Low Potassium Diet

What is potassium and why do I need to control it?

Potassium is a mineral found in many foods. Potassium helps to regulate muscle contraction, nerve signals and fluid balance in the body. Healthy kidneys remove excess potassium from the body when you pass urine. Too much or too little potassium in the blood can lead to an irregular heartbeat and muscle weakness.

What should my potassium level be?

Your potassium level will be measured when you have your bloods taken. Your potassium level should be between 3.5 and 5.3 mmol/L; a level higher than 6 mmol/L is considered to be **unsafe**. Only follow a low potassium diet if you have been advised to do so by your doctor or dietitian.

How do I control my potassium level?

Potassium is found naturally in a variety of foods and drinks. It may also be used as a food additive (potassium chloride) to replace salt in reduced salt products. The following tips can help you to reduce your potassium intake:

Avoid foods and salt substitutes that contain potassium chloride

Examples of additives and salt substitutes that are high in potassium		
Potassium chloride – Check food labels or ingredient lists for foods containing this.		
Salt substitute (others may exist)	Lo-Salt	Morton salt substitute
	Saxa So-Low	Nu-salt

Choose cooking methods that reduce the amount of potassium in your food

The way we cook vegetables and potatoes affects the potassium content. By boiling your vegetables you will be able to remove some of the potassium out into the water. Do not use the water in any sauces or gravies.

- Cut vegetables and potatoes in to small pieces and boil in a large volume of water
- Pre-boil vegetables before adding to soups and stews, stir fries, curries or roasting
- Avoid cooking vegetables in the microwave or steaming (the potassium content is higher)
- Reduce having potatoes baked in the oven (jacket potatoes)

Reduce your intake of foods high in potassium

Reduce intake	Better choices
Fruits: Limit fruits to two small portions per day Restrict bananas, avocado, rhubarb, apricot, kiwi, dried fruit, coconut and blackcurrants	1 portion = 1 small fruit or a handful of berries Apples, pears, canned fruit, satsumas, peaches, nectarines, berries, lemon/lime
Vegetables: Fried, roasted or chipped vegetables (pre-boil) Potato wedges, hash browns, waffles, instant mash Stir fried, steamed and microwaved vegetables Mushrooms, tomato puree, spinach, fresh tomatoes, fresh beetroot Potato pakoras, okra, callaloo, breadfruit, taro and plantain	Limit vegetables to 2-3 portions per day. Limit salad to 1 side salad per day (in place of a vegetable portion) 1 portion = 2 tablespoons of vegetables Choose boiled vegetables Cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, corn, cucumber, green beans, peas, peppers, swede, frozen mixed vegetables Tinned tomatoes, pickled beetroot
Bread, cereals and grains: Bread containing dried fruit Cereal containing bran, nuts, chocolate or dried fruit (All bran, muesli, fruit loaf)	Wholemeal, 50:50 or white bread Cereals not containing bran, nuts, chocolate or dried fruit (Weetabix, porridge, rice crispies) Pasta, rice, noodles, quinoa, couscous
Dairy and alternatives: Limit dairy milk (all types) to 1/2 pint per day (this includes yoghurt, custard and milk puddings) Avoid almond, condensed and evaporated milk	Oat milk and rice milk Hard and soft cheese, cream cheese, cottage cheese Cream, crème fraîche
Snacks: Fruit and nut snack bars Nuts and seeds (all types) Potato pulse and vegetable crisps/snacks, Twiglets Bombay mix	Corn or maize based snacks (Sunbites, Wotsits, tortilla chips, Monster Munch) Rice based snacks Breadsticks, pretzels, cream crackers, crispbreads, unsalted and candied popcorn
Sweets: Confectionary, nougat, biscuit and cakes containing chocolate, dried fruit and nuts Solid chocolate bars, fudge, toffee, liquorice	Mints, boiled, chewy or jelly sweets, marshmallow, Turkish delight (without nuts) Plain biscuits and cake (without dried fruit, nuts and chocolate)
Drinks: Coffee (limit to one mug a day), malted drinks, e.g. Horlicks or Ovaltine, fruit juice, smoothies Hot chocolate, Bovril, beer, stout and wine	Tea, herbal tea, Camp coffee, Squash/cordial drinks, flavoured water, carbonated drinks and spirits
Miscellaneous: Nut butters, Marmite	Jam, marmalade, honey, lemon curd, golden syrup, fresh herbs and spices

