



Dietary Advice for People with Kidney Disease

What do your kidneys do?

Your kidneys filter the blood, removing waste products and excess fluid. If your kidneys are not working well, waste products and fluid will build up in the body.

What you eat and drink affects your health, and you may be advised to make some changes to your diet and fluid intake.

Eating healthily

Eating a balanced diet may help you to manage health conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or heart disease. Choose a variety of different foods, and include fruits and vegetables in your diet regularly.

Try to keep your weight within a healthy range. If you are overweight, losing weight and taking regular exercise can help to control your blood pressure.

Poor appetite

There may be times when you have a poor appetite, or food does not taste as good. This may affect the amount of food you are able to eat and you may start to lose weight. Please speak to your dietitian, who will be able to offer you help and advice.

Salt

Sodium Chloride is commonly known as salt. In the body, sodium helps to regulate fluid balance and blood pressure. Healthy kidneys filter sodium and too much sodium in the body is removed when you go to the toilet to pass urine.

Salt is found naturally at low levels in all foods. It is also added to processed foods, as well as extra salt being added by individuals at the table and in cooking. Reducing the amount of salt and salty foods you eat can also help to control your blood pressure.

If you have heart or kidney failure and have been advised to reduce your fluid intake by your doctor, following a low salt diet will help (salt makes you thirsty).

Potassium

Potassium helps to regulate muscle contraction, nerve signals and fluid balance. Potassium is a mineral found in many foods.

Healthy kidneys will control the level of potassium in the blood and remove it from your body when you go to the toilet to pass urine. If your kidneys are not working well, the potassium level in your blood may rise.

Too much or too little potassium in the blood can lead to an irregular heartbeat and muscle weakness. Only follow a low potassium diet if you have been advised to do so by your doctor or dietitian.

Phosphate

In the body, phosphate combines with calcium to form the hard structure of bones and teeth. Your body gets phosphate (a mineral) from a number of different foods. Healthy kidneys will control the level of phosphate in your blood. If your kidneys are not working well, the phosphate level in your blood may rise. High levels of phosphate may cause:

- Weak, brittle bones and aching joints
- Itchy skin and eyes
- Damage to your heart and blood vessels, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke

The dietitian may advise you to reduce the amount of phosphate you eat to help control the phosphate level in the blood. You may also be prescribed a tablet to take with food. This tablet is called a phosphate binder, which helps to remove excess phosphate from the food you eat.

Fluid

Our bodies contain a large amount of water which is essential for life. It helps to maintain our blood pressure and the functions of the body. Too much fluid in your body will affect your blood pressure. It may cause puffy eyes, headaches and swelling of your feet, ankles and legs. Fluid may also build up around your lungs making it difficult to breathe.

You may be advised by your doctor or dietitian to limit your fluid intake. This will depend upon your health condition; if you need dialysis, the type and frequency, and the amount of urine you pass.

If you are diabetic, good blood glucose control will help you to control your fluid intake (high sugar levels will make you thirsty).

Diabetes

Good diabetic control will help to reduce the risk of developing diabetic complications. If you have diabetes, you should continue to have your diabetes reviewed annually by your GP or diabetes specialist doctor. You should also continue to have your eyes and feet checked on a regular basis.

