

How to Limit Potassium

What is potassium?

Potassium is a mineral found naturally in many foods and as a supplement. Its' main role in the body is to help maintain normal levels of fluid inside our cells (sodium, its counterpart, maintains normal fluid levels outside of cells), Potassium also helps muscles to contract and supports normal blood pressure. One especially important muscle, the heart, beats at a normal rhythm because of potassium. For potassium to perform these functions, blood levels must be kept between 3.5 and 5.5 mEq/L. Healthy kidneys remove excess potassium in the urine to help maintain normal levels in the blood.

If you need to limit potassium

When kidneys are not working well, potassium can buildup in your blood. High potassium in the blood is called hyperkalemia, which may occur in people with advanced stages of chronic kidney disease (CKD). High potassium levels can be dangerous. Some effects include nausea, weakness, numbness, and slow pulse. Have your potassium levels checked regularly and ask your doctor or Registered Dietitian Nutritionist about your potassium results.

Nutrition guidelines

Refer to the table below for examples of foods lower and higher in potassium and follow this advice to keep your potassium at safe levels:

- Talk to your renal dietitian about creating an eating plan.
- Limit foods that are high in potassium.
- Limit milk and milk products or replace with nondairy substitutes.
- Discard liquids from canned fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid salt substitutes and other seasonings that contain potassium
- Read labels on packaged foods and avoid potassium chloride.
- Pay attention to serving size.



High in potassium foods

Limit or avoid high-potassium foods.

| Food group | High-potassium foods |
|------------|---|
| Fruits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avocados • Bananas • Cantaloupe and Honeydew • Dried fruits • Kiwi • Mangos • Oranges & orange juice • Papaya • Prune juice |
| Vegetables | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artichoke • Dried beans and peas |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pumpkin • Potatoes, French fries • Spinach (cooked) • Sweet potatoes • Tomatoes, tomato sauce • Vegetable juices • Winter squash |
| Dairy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice cream • Milk • Yogurt |
| Miscellaneous | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chocolate • Molasses • Salt substitute • Seeds and nuts |

Low-potassium Foods

Ask your registered or renal dietitian about the amount you can safely eat.

| Food group | Low-potassium foods |
|------------|--|
| Fruits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apples • Berries • Fruit Cocktail • Grapes • Lemon • Peaches • Canned Pears • Pineapple • Plums • Watermelon |
| Vegetables | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrots • Cabbage • Cauliflower • Cucumber • Eggplant • Green beans • Lettuce • Onion • Summer squash • Sweet peppers |

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