

Protein and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

Importance of protein

Eating protein is very important to stay healthy. Without protein, your body would be unable to heal from injury, stop bleeding or fight infection. Although protein is a necessary nutrient, people with CKD are often faced with the dilemma of having to limit protein intake.

Protein and CKD

When protein is ingested, protein waste products are created. In CKD, kidneys lose the ability to remove protein waste and it starts to build up in the blood. Excess protein waste can make you feel tired, lose your appetite, and cause nausea and vomiting.

Your protein recommendations

The amount of you can eat when you have CKD is based on the stage of kidney disease, your nutrition status and body size. If you're in stages 1, 2, or 3, your protein intake may be the same amount recommended for a healthy adult diet. However, if you're in stage 4 of CKD, you may be instructed to cut back on red meat, poultry, fish, and dairy since they contain high levels of protein. We strongly recommend counseling sessions with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist for planning and monitoring your diet. Knowing how much, or how little, is equally important.

Choose healthier proteins

It is a good idea to avoid processed or fast foods. Instead, choose fresh, lean animal proteins or plant-based options. Plant proteins are a great way to build and maintain muscle while putting less stress on your kidneys. Watch your portion sizes and how often you eat protein-rich foods.

Some healthy protein choices to consider include:

Plant-based proteins:

- Soy, tofu
- Beans
- Seeds
- Lentils
- Whole wheat
- Nuts
- Peanut butter
- Brown rice
- Peas
- Green beans
- Chickpeas

Animal-based proteins:

- Chicken
- Turkey
- Fish
- Shellfish
- Beef
- Pork
- Eggs
- Dairy & fresh cheese

Phosphorus is a mineral that builds up in the blood as kidney failure progresses. You may be advised to reduce high protein foods that are high in phosphorus, if your level goes above normal. Milk, yogurt, cheese, dried beans and peas, nuts and seeds, peanut butter and some soy products are high in protein and phosphorus.