

What is Potassium?

- Potassium is a mineral that helps your nerves and muscles work
- Potassium is absorbed from the foods and drinks we consume
- High or low potassium can cause:



What is a Safe Amount of Potassium?

Normal diet: **2600-3400 mg/day**

Potassium restricted diet: **< 2000 mg/day**

Removing Potassium from Food



SOAKING

- Good for meats, leafy green vegetables, and grains



BOILING

- Good for root vegetables, like potatoes, carrots, squash, rutabagas, and more
- Soaking followed by boiling is best for legumes or certain canned food items

What the Amount of Potassium in Food Means

| Amount (mg) | Daily Value (%) | Level |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Under 100 mg | < 3% | Low |
| 101-200 mg | 3-6% | Medium |
| 201-300 mg | 6-9% | High |
| Over 300 mg | > 9% | Very High |

If you are unsure if an item is high or low potassium, look at the **NUTRITION FACTS**

Potassium and CKD

- The kidneys work to regulate the amount of potassium in the blood
- If your kidneys are not working properly, potassium can build up which is **dangerous**
- On **hemodialysis**, you may need to limit your potassium intake to avoid build-up between treatments.
- On **peritoneal dialysis**, you **may** be able to have higher potassium foods but check with your registered dietitian and/or doctor.

➤➤➤ **Complete dialysis treatments so potassium is removed from your blood!**

Key Concepts of a Low Potassium Diet with CKD

Maintain a healthy, balanced diet



Include healthy plant-based foods



Reduce animal proteins



Beware of processed foods



Avoid high sugar and salt foods

Consider Serving Size



Portion size



Number of servings



Cooking affects serving size

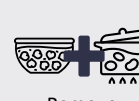
Reduce potassium in your diet



Avoid Potassium Additives



Avoid processed meats



Remove Potassium from Food



Read nutrition labels

Tips for Choosing Kidney-Friendly Foods

Animal-based Proteins



- Most are very high in potassium
- Animal-based proteins includes meat, eggs, and dairy
- Potassium additives are very common in prepared meats

Grains



- Whole grains have higher amounts of potassium than refined grains
- Whole grains can be a great source of fibre and protein
- Low potassium whole grains include: Barley, wild rice

Fruits & Vegetables



- Choose lower potassium options, follow the serving size
- Low potassium fruits include: Apples, berries, grapes
- Low potassium vegetables include: Corn, peppers, onion

! Other high potassium foods to limit:

- Nuts, seeds, and nut butters
- Juices, sodas, and caffeinated drinks
- Fried, prepared, or fast foods
- Chocolate, syrup, and molasses

Potassium and Chronic Kidney Disease

Introduction

Potassium is a mineral that helps your nerves and muscles work well. Normally, healthy kidneys will keep the right amount of potassium in your body to keep your heartbeat regular and your muscles working right. If your kidneys are not working well, the potassium level in your blood can become too high or too low. Very high or low levels of potassium are dangerous. They can cause muscle weakness, irregular heartbeats, and even a heart attack.

Most of the potassium in our blood comes from the foods and beverages we consume. Almost all foods have potassium, but some have much more than others. The amount of potassium your body can process depends on several factors: your body size, the medications you are taking, how well your kidneys are functioning and, if you are on dialysis, how well your dialysis treatments are working.

If you need to adjust your potassium intake, a **Registered Dietitian** and/or **Doctor** will tell you how much potassium you should have each day to keep your blood levels in the healthy range.

- ! If you are on hemodialysis, you may need to limit your potassium intake to avoid build-up between treatments.
- ! If you are on peritoneal dialysis, you **may** be able to have higher potassium foods but check with your **registered dietitian** and/or doctor to be sure.

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What is a Safe Amount of Potassium?

In your **BLOOD**¹:

- Potassium levels should be between 3.5 to 5.0 mmol/L
- With **CKD** or on **peritoneal dialysis**, your blood potassium levels should be within this range
- On **hemodialysis**, your blood potassium levels should be 5.5 mmol/L or less (between treatments)

A DIETITIAN can advise you on the specific level of potassium safe for you!

In your **DIET**²:

- A normal amount of potassium in a typical diet is 2600 to 3400 milligrams per day.
- A potassium restricted diet is typically **under 2000 milligrams per day**.

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How Can I Keep My Potassium Level from Getting Too High?

It's important to monitor your intake of potassium rich foods. A **Registered Dietitian** will help you make an eating plan that gives you the right amount of potassium.

- ! If you are on **DIALYSIS**, be sure to complete all treatments so potassium can be filtered out of your blood.

1. Maintain a Healthy, Balanced Diet

Traditional nutrition guidelines for people with CKD recommended *avoiding* many plant-based foods. This is because plant-based foods were thought to have higher levels of potassium.

However, recent studies³⁻⁵ and expert opinion suggest a more balanced diet should be followed. This includes eating **healthy plant-based foods**.

Moreover, studies^{6,7} also suggest that potassium in unprocessed plant foods is less well absorbed than potassium in animal products and additives. There are a few reasons for this:

1. The additional fibres content of plant-based foods helps your body remove excess potassium and
2. Most of the potassium in plants is hard for the human body to access and absorb.

BENEFITS OF A PLANT-BASED DIET

- ✓ Lower blood pressure and cholesterol
- ✓ Improve diabetes and weight management
- ✓ Slow kidney disease progression

Therefore, reducing your dietary potassium should be consistent with key concepts of the CKD diet:

- Reducing animal proteins (which are rich sources of potassium)
- Avoiding fruit and vegetable juices and sodas (which are often also high in sugar and salt)
- Reducing processed foods (which are often high in potassium and/or salt)

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2. Consider Serving Size

The amount of potassium you take in depends on the amount of food you're eating and its potassium content. Here are some things to keep in mind about serving size:

- Foods that contain a smaller amount of potassium may have a **different serving size** than foods with a higher amount of potassium.

Example: Lychees contain a small amount of potassium, so a serving size equals 10 fruit. Mangoes have a much higher potassium content, so a serving size is limited to ½ fruit.

- The **number of servings** you have each day is important. Even low potassium foods can make your potassium level high if you are having too much of them.
- Cooking may cause some foods to **shrink to a smaller serving size**, but the potassium content does remain the same.

Example: ½ cup of raw spinach will shrink to 1 tbsp when cooked. Eating ½ cup of cooked spinach will have a much higher potassium content than ½ cup of raw spinach.

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3. Avoid Potassium Additives

- Potassium additives are common preservatives in many foods and are **very concentrated sources of potassium**. These additives can provide a potentially dangerous amount of potassium to someone with kidney disease.

- Potassium additives can legally be added to any fresh or frozen meat products so be sure to check your labels and avoid it.
- Potassium additives are very commonly found in processed meats, including deli meats and meats at fast-food restaurants.
- When maintaining a low potassium diet, avoid foods that list potassium additives on the ingredient list.
 - Look for words that include ‘potassium’ in the ingredient list, like potassium chloride, potassium phosphate, and potassium lactate.
- Low sodium foods often have potassium additives.
- Be sure to look for potassium on the Nutrition Facts table.

READING FOOD LABELS

| Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive | |
|---|-----|
| Amount Per 2 slices, approx. (50 g) Teneur par 2 tranches, env. (50 g) | |
| % Daily Value % valeur quotidienne | |
| Calories/Calories 70 | |
| Fat/Lipides 2 g | 3% |
| Saturated/saturés 0.5 g + Trans/trans 0 g | 3% |
| Cholesterol/Cholestérol 30 mg | |
| Sodium / Sodium 380 mg | 16% |
| Carbohydrate / Glucides 1 g | 1% |
| Fibre / Fibres 0g | 0% |
| Sugars / Sucres 1 g | |
| Protein / Protéines 10 g | |
| Vitamin A / Vitamine A | 0% |
| Vitamin C / Vitamine C | 0% |
| Calcium / Calcium | 0% |
| Potassium/ Potassium | 4% |

Serving Size
Tells you what a single portion is

Percent Daily Value
Helps you know if a food is high or low in a nutrient

Potassium
Listed per serving

In general, the amount of potassium means:

| Amount | % Daily Value | Level |
|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| Under 100 mg | Less than 3% | Low |
| 101-200 mg | 3-6% | Medium |
| 201-300 mg | 6-9% | High |
| Over 300 mg | More than 9% | Very High |

Alternatives to avoid potassium additives in meat:

- Use additive-free sandwich fillings such as thinly sliced leftover cooked chicken/turkey/pork/beef, egg or no-added-salt canned fish.
- Some cold cuts are promoted as being additive-free, but beware – **all** prepared meats have a high sodium content.

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4. Remove Potassium from Food

Reducing the potassium level in food allows you to still enjoy the foods you love while maintaining a healthy diet. Some cooking methods will **reduce the amount of potassium** in certain foods. Cooking methods like boiling are the best for reducing potassium content as the potassium will be released into the water. Other methods like baking will retain more of the potassium.

- Boiling food is a great way to significantly reduce the amount of potassium in high potassium foods like vegetables and legumes.
- Soaking foods like meats, leafy green vegetables, and grains in hot water has also been shown to reduce potassium content⁹.

Here are some methods to remove potassium from your food:

Double Boil Vegetables:

Boiling root vegetables, such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, beets, winter squash, and rutabagas, twice is considered the best way to remove some of the potassium. While this method can reduce up to 50% of the potassium in these vegetables, they still may be considered a high potassium vegetable.

Here’s how to double boil vegetables:

1. Wash and peel the vegetable.
2. Dice or thinly slice the vegetable.
3. Place the vegetable in room temperature water. Use two times the amount of water to the amount of vegetable.
4. Bring the water to a boil.

5. Drain off the water and add fresh, room temperature water. Use two times the amount of water to the amount of vegetable.
6. Bring the water to a boil again and cook until the vegetable is soft and tender.
7. Drain and discard the boiling water.

 For more information on how to prepare kidney-friendly squash, check out our [Pumpkins, Squash and All Things Fall](#) blog post on the Kidney Community Kitchen.

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Boil and Soak Potatoes:

A recent study found another way to reduce even more potassium when cooking potatoes¹⁰.

Fresh Potatoes:

1. Peel the potatoes
2. Cut into strips (1.2 cm x 1.2 cm) or dice (2 cm x 2 cm x 2cm)
3. Boil in water (1.5 L) for 8 minutes
4. Drain potatoes
5. Add clean water (1.5 L) and soak for 12 hours
6. Use as required, e.g. mash, potato salad, home fries, baked

Canned Potatoes:


1. Wash and drain
2. Soak in water (1.5L) for 12 hours
3. Use as required

Frozen French Fries:

1. Soak frozen fries in water (1.5L) for 12 hours
2. Drain and dry fries
3. Prepare in the usual way

| The amount of potassium in potatoes: | |
|--|----------------|
| Preparation of Potato (100 g) | Potassium (mg) |
| Raw | 454 |
| Strip cut, boiled | 287 |
| Dice cut, boiled | 295 |
| Strip cut, boiled for 8 minutes then soaked in water for 12 hours | 41 |
| Strip cut, boiled for 8 minutes then soaked in water for 12 hours then deep-fried* | 153 |
| Dice cut, boiled for 8 minutes then soaked in water for 12 hours | 122 |
| Canned | 105-118 |
| Canned soaked in water for 12 hours | 23-31 |
| Frozen fries, fried* | 600-700 |
| Frozen fries, soaked in water for 12 hours then fried* | 70-90 |

*Frying potatoes will increase the potassium content due to moisture

 For more information on how to prepare kidney-friendly potatoes, check out our [Lower Potassium Potatoes](#) blog post on the Kidney Community Kitchen.

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Reduce Potassium in Legumes

Traditionally, patients with kidney disease have been advised against eating legumes. But legumes are an important part of a healthy diet since they are loaded with vitamins, fiber, proteins, and minerals.

While research⁵ shows that potassium from legumes such as beans, lentils, and peanuts is poorly absorbed, the amount of potassium in these foods can also vary.

Example: Chickpeas are lower in potassium than soybeans and white beans, but all are considered to have 'high' potassium.

Fortunately, there are ways to reduce the potassium in some legumes so that they can be safely enjoyed by those with kidney disease^{11,13}.

You can reduce the potassium in dried chickpeas, lentils, and green beans by following these 4 easy steps:

1. Let the legumes soak in a bowl of water for 12 hours or more (do it before bedtime!)
2. Then, get rid of the soaking water (now full of potassium), and rinse the legumes
3. For **chickpeas** boil for 150 minutes or pressure cook for 40 minutes.
For **lentils** boil for 30 minutes or pressure cook for 15 minutes.
For **green beans** boil for 15 minutes.
4. After cooking discard the cooking water as it will contain potassium leached from the legumes.

Preparing the legumes this way effectively removes much of the potassium they contain.

For Canned Legumes:

You can also buy legumes canned. Canned varieties with “no salt added” are the best choice, but you can remove the salt by rinsing the legumes before cooking. The canning process removes much of the potassium (and phosphorus), so buying canned legumes can save you time.

To lower the potassium content of canned chickpeas and lentils follow the steps above. For **step 3** boil 15 minutes for chickpeas and 4 minutes for lentils, then discard the cooking water.

Always consult a **dietitian** when incorporating legumes into your diet and be sure to read nutrition labels to see if there are additives.

 For more information on how to prepare kidney-friendly legumes, check out our [**Can Kidney Beans and Plant-Based Proteins Be Kidney Friendly?**](#) blog post on the Kidney Community Kitchen.

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Soak Meats Before Cooking

Meats and other animal-based proteins are very high in potassium (including fish, poultry, beef, and pork as well as eggs and dairy).

A recent study⁹ suggests that soaking meat for 5-10 mins in hot water can reduce potassium by in beef by about 40% and in chicken by about 30%.

You can reduce the potassium in beef and chicken by following these 4 easy steps:

1. Bring water to a boil.
2. Remove water from heat and add the portion of meat. Aim for a ratio of 5 parts water to 1 part meat (for example, if you are cooking 6 oz of beef, use at least 30 oz of water).
3. Soak the meat for 5-10 minutes.

There is still more research needed to understand the how cooking methods impact the potassium content of meat. Consult a **registered dietitian** to find the right balance of animal protein in your diet.

Choosing plant-based proteins as often as possible can also help avoid high potassium animal-based proteins.

Example: A 6 oz steak (~150 g) contains about 530 mg of potassium, compared to 1 cup (~200 g) of canned chickpeas which has 166 mg of potassium.

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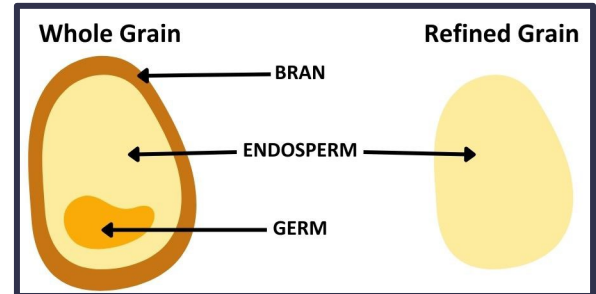
Choosing Kidney-Friendly Foods

Grains

There are two types of grain you will encounter in your diet: whole grains and refined grains.

Whole Grains

- Whole grains contain all parts of the grain, including the **bran**, **endosperm**, and **germ** (see picture on the right).
- Whole grains include wheat, corn, rice, oats, barley, quinoa, rye and even popcorn.
- Whole grains were previously discouraged in a renal diet because of a high phosphorus and potassium content.



The parts of the grain in whole grains compared to refined grains.

BENEFITS OF WHOLE GRAINS

- ✓ Improve digestive health
- ✓ Lower cholesterol
- ✓ Reduce risk of heart disease and stroke

The good news is that recent studies¹² have found that:

- Potassium and phosphorus in whole grains are not well absorbed by the body.
- Whole grains are a great source of **fibre** and **protein** which can be beneficial to people with kidney disease.

Whole grains are an important part of a well-balanced kidney diet. Aim to choose whole grains with lower potassium levels more often. See the table below:

| Whole grains with higher or lower potassium: | |
|---|---|
| Lower Potassium Choices | Higher Potassium Choices <i>Speak to your dietitian about safely adding these into your diet</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barley*• Buckwheat (kasha)• Bulgur*• Popcorn• Wild rice | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amaranth• Brown rice• Millet• Oats• Quinoa• Sorghum• Spelt• Teff• Triticale• Wheat berries |

* High in fibre, low in potassium

Refined Grains

- Refined grains have the germ and bran removed (see picture above).
- Refined grains include white rice, and are more common in baked goods, crackers, pasta, and snack foods.
- The processing of the grain reduces its nutritional content, including lowering the potassium content.
- Some refined grains may have nutrients added back (enriched grains) or have nutrients added that are not typically in grains (fortified grains).

Always read **Nutrition Labels** to know the amount of potassium in grains.

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Fruits and Vegetables

All fruits and vegetables contain potassium. They also contain fibre and other nutrients which are an important part of a healthy diet. High fibre foods will help you to eliminate some potassium.

When adding fruits and vegetables to your diet:

- Choose fruits and vegetables with lower potassium more often.
- Limit your intake of higher potassium fruits and vegetables if your blood levels of potassium are high.
- Follow the serving size suggested for the low potassium fruits and vegetables.
- Do not use the liquid from canned, cooked, or frozen fruits and vegetables. The liquids are high in potassium.

Low and high potassium choices for FRUITS:

| Lower Potassium Choices <i>Limit to ½ cup (125 ml) serving size unless noted</i> | Higher Potassium Choices <i>Speak to your dietitian about safely adding these foods into your diet.</i> |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple (1) • Apple rings (5) • Applesauce • Blackberries • Blueberries • Boysenberries • Canned fruit, all types (drained) • Casaba melon • Cherries (10) • Clementine (1) • Crab-apple (3) • Cranberries • Fruit cocktail (drained) • Gooseberries • Grapefruit ^a (1/2) • Grapes (20) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kumquats (4) • Lemon (1) • Lime (2) • Loganberries • Lychees (10) • Mandarin orange (1) • Mango (1/2) • Peach (1) • Pear (1) • Pineapple • Plum (1) • Raspberries • Rhubarb • Strawberries • Tangelo (1) • Tangerine (1) • Watermelon |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apricots • Banana • Breadfruit • Cantaloupe • Coconut, dried or raw • Dates • Dried fruit, all types • Durian • Elderberries • Figs • Guava • Honeydew melon • Fresh Jackfruit • Kiwi • Medjool Date • Nectarine • Orange • Papaya • Passion fruit • Peach • Persimmon • Pomelo • Pomegranate • Prickly pear • Prunes • Raisins • Sapodilla • Sapote • Soursop • Sugar apple • Starfruit ^b • Tamarind |

^a **Potential drug interaction** – speak to your Pharmacist or Registered Dietitian

^b **Do NOT consume.** Speak to your Registered Dietitian. Starfruit may also be called carambala, bilimbi, belimbing, Chinese starfruit, or star apple

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Low and high potassium choices for VEGETABLES:

| Lower Potassium Choices <i>Limit to ½ cup (125 ml) serving size unless noted</i> | | Higher Potassium Choices <i>Speak to your dietitian about safely adding these foods into your diet.</i> | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| • Alfalfa sprouts | • Green beans | • Acorn squash | • Lentils ^a |
| • Arugula, raw (1 cup) | • Kale | • Artichoke | • Portabella mushrooms |
| • Asparagus (5) | • Leeks | • Avocado | • Potatoes ^c |
| • Bamboo shoots, canned | • Canned mushrooms, drained | • Bamboo shoots, fresh | • Rapini, cooked |
| • Bean sprouts | • White mushrooms, raw | • Beans ^a (Adzuki, Black, Kidney, Lima, Mung, Navy, Pinto, Red, Roman, White) | • Rutabaga ^b |
| • Beet greens, raw | • Mustard greens | • Beets ^b | • Shitake mushrooms, raw |
| • Broadbeans | • Okra | • Bok choy | • Snow peas, cooked |
| • Broccoli, raw | • Onion, all types | • Broadbeans, canned | • Soybeans |
| • Cabbage | • Peppers | • Broccoli, cooked | • Spinach, cooked |
| • Carrots | • Radish | • Brussel sprouts | • Split peas |
| • Cauliflower | • Rapini, raw | • Burdock root | • Succotash |
| • Celeriac, cooked | • Snow peas, raw (10) | • Butternut squash | • Sweet Potatoes ^b |
| • Celery (1 stalk) | • Spaghetti squash | • Cassava | • Swiss chard, cooked |
| • Chayote | • Spinach, raw (1 cup) | • Celeriac, raw | • Taro, cooked |
| • Chicory greens (1 cup) | • Swiss chard, raw | • Chickpeas ^a | • Tempeh |
| • Collard greens | • Cherry tomato (5) | • Green peas | • Tomato paste |
| • Corn (1/2 cob) | • Tomato (1/2) | • Cress, cooked | • Tomato sauce |
| • Cress, raw | • Turnip | • Lotus root | • Water chestnuts, raw |
| • Cucumber | • Turnip greens | • Mushrooms, dried | • Yam ^b |
| • Dandelion greens | • Watercress, raw | • Parsnips | • Zucchini, cooked |
| • Eggplant | • Water chestnuts, canned | • Dock (sorrel) | |
| • Endive (1) | • Wax beans | • Kohlrabi | |
| • Escarole | • Zucchini, raw | | |
| • Fennel | | | |
| • Fiddlehead greens, boiled | | | |

^a See cooking instructions in [Reduce Potassium in Legumes](#) section above.

^b See cooking instructions in [Double Boil Vegetables](#) section above.

^c See cooking instructions in [Boil and Soak Potatoes](#) section above.


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Other High Potassium Foods to Limit

Always consult a **registered dietitian** when adding these foods to your diet:

| Snacks | Beverages | Dairy* | Sweets |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|---------------|
| • Nuts and seeds (and nut butters) | • Juices and soda | • Milk | • Chocolate |
| • Dried fruits and vegetables | • Coffee and tea | • Yogurt | • Maple syrup |
| • Fried or fast food | • Coconut water | • Kefir | • Molasses |

* Check out our [Choosing Plant-based Dairy Alternatives](#) blog post on the Kidney Community Kitchen

 You can find many kidney-friendly and low-potassium recipes on our [Kidney Community Kitchen Cookbook](#).

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