

# Nutrition for Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

Our kidneys filter toxins and wastes from our blood. Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is the presence of kidney damage, or decreased kidney function for three months or more.

## How can I keep my kidney function from decreasing?

You can help maintain your kidney function. To do this you need to **control your blood pressure** and blood sugar (if you have diabetes):

- eat the diet recommended by your dietitian, including eating less salt
- stop smoking
- exercise regularly
- take your medications as directed

## How will my diet change?

All the food you eat produces waste in your body. When your kidneys are not able to remove this waste, it can build up in your body and cause problems.

Everybody has different needs so a kidney diet can be different for every person. This handout gives you the basics of the kidney diet. Your dietitian can tell you what changes you need to make.

## Protein

Protein is important for your body to build muscle, repair tissue, heal wounds, and fight infections. You need to eat the right amount of high protein foods. Eating too much protein makes waste products build up in your blood.

These waste products make you feel sick, tired, and give you a poor appetite. Most people need to eat only 6 oz (180 g) of beef, pork, poultry, eggs, cheese, fish, or wild game meats each day.

Try to eat the number of servings of high protein foods each day as your dietitian suggests.

## High protein food

- Egg
- Chicken or turkey, lean cooked
- Beef, pork, game, cooked
- Fish or seafood, cooked
- \*Cheese
- \*Yogurt
- \*Milk, skim, 1%, 2%
- \*Soy beverage
- \*Tofu, firm
- \*Cooked dried beans (e.g., navy, black, mung, chickpeas)

\*These foods are high in phosphorus and may need to be avoided. Ask your dietitian if these foods can fit in your diet plan.

## Fluid

Drink 4 to 8 cups (1 to 2 L) of water per day. You may need to limit your fluids and cut back on sodium (salt) if you notice swelling in your legs. Your doctor or dietitian will help you decide how much fluid is right for you.

City tap water and bottled water are okay to drink. If you drink well water, it needs to be analyzed every year for mineral content. If you have a water softener, make sure it is not hooked up to your drinking water tap.

## Sodium (salt)

Eating too much sodium or salt makes it hard for your kidneys to get rid of water and to control your blood pressure. A high sodium diet can cause swelling, shortness of breath, and high blood pressure. Eating less sodium can help prevent more damage to your kidneys and help maintain your current kidney function.

Tips to eat less salt:

- Do not add salt to your cooking.
- Do not add salt at the table.
- Eat less canned, processed, and pre-packaged foods.
- Eat less pickles and salty snack foods like pretzels, chips, and salted crackers.

## Potassium

As your kidney function decreases the mineral potassium may begin to build up in your body. Some medications can also cause your potassium levels to increase.

If your blood potassium level is high, you may need to limit the amount of potassium in your diet. Vegetables and fruit are the main source of potassium in the diet. Ask your dietitian for more information.

## Phosphorus

When your kidneys can't clean your blood anymore, phosphorus can begin to build up in your body. People with high phosphorus levels often complain of itchy skin.

If your blood phosphorus level is high, you will need to limit your intake of high phosphorus foods. These are foods like milk and dairy products, nuts, seeds, chocolate, colas, and dried beans.

You may also have to take a calcium pill with your meals to help decrease the amount of phosphorus absorbed from your food. Ask your doctor or dietitian for more information.

## Fibre

Fibre can help prevent constipation. Vegetables, fruit, and whole grain products are good sources of fibre. Many high fibre foods are also high in potassium and phosphorus. You may need to limit some high fibre foods if your blood levels of potassium and phosphorus are high. Ask your dietitian for more information.

## Supplements

You may need to take a B-complex vitamin supplement made for people with kidney disease. Talk to your dietitian, doctor, or pharmacist about which ones are right for you.

Some supplements, including some herbal supplements, may be harmful to people with reduced kidney function. Talk to your dietitian, pharmacist, or doctor before taking any vitamin and mineral, herbal, or other supplements.

## Maintaining a healthy weight

It is important to eat the right amount of calories to stay at a healthy body weight. This may mean cutting back on the calories you eat, or eating more calories. Ask your dietitian to help find a healthy weight for you.

## If you have a poor appetite

You need to eat even if you feel sick or have a bad taste in your mouth. If you don't get enough calories, your muscles will break down and become weak.

Tips to improve your appetite:

- Eat 3 smaller meals plus 3 to 4 snacks a day.
- Eat cold foods. The smell from hot foods might make you feel sick.
- Add extra healthy fats such as olive or canola oil to your food.
- Try a nutrition supplement drink. Ask your dietitian about a product that is right for you.
- Contact your dietitian if you are not sure of what to eat when you are feeling sick.

## **If you have diabetes**

To keep your kidneys working as well as possible, you need to continue to control your blood sugar:

- Check and record your blood sugar regularly.
- Follow your meal plan for diabetes to eat regular meals and snacks.
- Spread your carbohydrate foods evenly throughout the day.
- Take the right amount of insulin or diabetes pills.

## **Meal planning**

It will take some time to get used to your kidney diet. Try some of the tips below:

- Use a calendar on your fridge to help you plan your meals.
- Change your favorite recipes to use less protein and salt.
- The next time you go shopping:
  - Look for low sodium products similar to the products you normally buy.
  - Ask the butcher for fresh, “unpumped” or “unenhanced” meat.
  - Avoid foods that say “percentage of solution added”, “with broth” or “flavour enhanced”.
  - Avoid fresh or frozen meats that are high in sodium.
  - Compare the ingredient list to your list of high potassium foods. Avoid foods that have ingredients that are high in potassium such as bananas, oranges, potatoes, molasses, and potassium chloride (KCl).