

Potassium and Your Kidney Diet

Your kidneys remove extra potassium from your body. If your kidneys are not working properly, potassium can build up in your blood.

Too much or too little potassium can cause your heart to beat too fast, too slow, or to stop beating. You can't always feel these changes.

Food choices can affect your blood potassium levels. Your dietitian can help you adjust your choices and answer questions about potassium in your diet.

Serving size

A food can be high or low in potassium, depending on how it is prepared. For example, ½ cup (125 mL) boiled spinach has more potassium than ½ cup (125 mL) raw spinach because boiled spinach packs together more tightly when cooked.

Many foods have potassium in them, so it is important to learn which ones are good choices.

How much potassium can I have?

The amount of potassium you should eat depends on:

- your body size
- the medicine you take
- how well your kidneys are working
- the amount of urine you make

When you are on dialysis, the quality of your dialysis affects your blood potassium levels. Ask your dietitian for more information.

Know your blood potassium level

Ask your doctor or dietitian what your potassium level should be.

If your blood potassium level is too high:

- don't eat vegetables and fruit that are high in potassium
- choose 5 to 6 servings a day of vegetables and fruit that are low potassium

Ask your dietitian for more information.

If your blood potassium is regularly within the normal range:

- talk to your dietitian about the right amount of potassium foods for you
- ask your dietitian how many servings you can eat

If your blood potassium level is too low:

- add high potassium vegetables and fruit to your diet
- aim for 1 to 2 servings of high potassium food choices every day

Ask your dietitian for more information.

Hidden potassium in packaged foods

It's often hard to know how much potassium is in foods. Potassium is not always listed in the Nutrition Facts table.

Read the ingredient list on packaged food. If the list has the word "potassium", or has foods high in potassium, then that food is likely higher in potassium.

Foods lower in potassium

Serving sizes are ½ cup (125 mL) or 1 medium piece unless other amounts are listed. These serving sizes provide less than 215 mg potassium per serving.  = Limit as it is high in sodium (salt).

Vegetables

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| • alfalfa sprouts | • corn | • mustard greens | • spinach, raw |
| • asparagus | • cucumber | • okra, raw or boiled | • squash – summer (chayote, crookneck, mo qua) |
| • bamboo shoots, canned  | • dandelion greens | • onions, green/white | • squash – winter (por qua, spaghetti) |
| • bean sprouts | • eggplant | • parsley | • suey choy |
| • beans, green/yellow | • endive | • peas, green | • Swiss chard, raw |
| • bitter gourd | • fennel | • peppers, bell | • tomato, ½ raw |
| • bitter melon pods | • fiddleheads | • peppers, chili, canned | • tomato sauce, ¼ cup (60 mL)  |
| • broccoli | • garden cress, raw | • peppers, chili, fresh, ¼ cup (60 mL) | • turnip |
| • cabbage, green/red | • garlic, 1 bulb | • potato, peeled, cubed or shredded, then boiled | • turnip greens |
| • carrots | • ginger root, ¼ cup (60 mL) | • radicchio | • water chestnuts, canned  |
| • cassava, boiled | • hominy | • radish | • water cress |
| • cauliflower | • jicama | • rapini | • winter melon/wax gourd |
| • celery | • kale | • shallots | • zucchini |
| • Chinese cabbage | • leeks | • snow peas, 10 pods | |
| • chives | • lettuce, all varieties | | |
| • cilantro | • mushrooms, raw or canned  | | |
| • collard greens | | | |

Tip: Peel potatoes and cut into small cubes or shred before boiling. Discard the water.

Tip: Tomato sauce is a higher potassium vegetable if you eat more than ¼ cup (60 mL) at a time.

Fruits

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| • apple, raw, sauce or juice | • coconut, raw or dried flakes | • kumquats | • pomegranate, ½ raw or ¼ cup (60 mL) juice |
| • apple pear, ½ medium | • crab apple | • lemon or lemonade | • prunes, 3 dried or canned, ¼ cup (60 mL) juice |
| • apple rings, 5 dried | • cranberry, raw, sauce or juice | • loganberries | • raspberries |
| • apricots, 2 raw, canned, or nectar | • currants, raw | • loquats | • rhubarb |
| • blackberries | • figs, canned, 1 raw or 3 dried | • lychee, 10 raw | • Saskatoon berries |
| • blueberries | • fruit cocktail, canned and drained | • mandarin orange | • strawberries |
| • boysenberries | • gooseberries | • mango, ½ raw | • tangerine |
| • casaba melon | • grape juice | • passion fruit, 3 | • watermelon |
| • cherries, 10 raw, canned | • grapes, 20 raw | • peach | |
| | • honeydew | • pear | |
| | | • pineapple | |
| | | • plum, 1 raw or 2 canned | |

Tip: Draining juice from canned fruit will cut down on the potassium content.

Foods higher in potassium

Serving sizes are ½ cup (125 mL) or 1 medium piece unless other amounts are listed. These serving sizes provide more than 215 mg potassium per serving.



= Limit as it is high in sodium (salt).

Vegetables

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| • amaranth (yin choy) | • gailan (Chinese broccoli) | • potato, whole boiled, baked, or microwaved | • Swiss chard, boiled |
| • artichokes | • garden cress, boiled | • potato chips/fries, hash browns, or scalloped | • sword beans |
| • bamboo shoots, raw or boiled | • gow gay | • pumpkin | • taro |
| • beet greens | • kohlrabi | • rutabaga | • tomato, canned or cooked |
| • beets | • lotus root | • saag | • tomato juice and V8 [®] juice, regular or low salt |
| • bok choy (pak choi) | • mushrooms, cooked | • sohanjna ki phalli | • tomato paste |
| • Brussels sprouts | • okra, boiled from frozen | • spinach, boiled | • tomato sauce, ½ cup (125 mL) |
| • carrot juice | • parsnips | • squash - winter (acorn, butternut, hubbard) | • water chestnuts, raw |
| • cassava, raw | • paruppu keerai (lamb's quarters) | • sweet potato | • wolfberry |
| • choy sum | • peas, black-eyed | | • yams |
| • daikon radish (lo bok) | | | • yardlong bean |

Tip: Ask your dietitian for more information about cooking high potassium vegetables.

Fruits

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| • apricots, dried | • coconut milk or water | • kiwi fruit | • plantain |
| • avocado | • currants, dried | • nectarine | • prickly pear |
| • bael fruit | • dates | • orange, navel, raw or juice | • pummelo |
| • banana | • durian | • papaya | • raisins |
| • breadfruit | • guava | • passion fruit juice | • sapota |
| • cantaloupe | • jackfruit | • persimmon | • tangelo |
| • cherimoya | | | |

Caution

Do not eat or drink **starfruit** and **starfruit juice**. These are dangerous if you have poor kidney function.

Grapefruit and **grapefruit juice** affect the way many medicines work. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if grapefruit is safe for you to have.

Other foods high in potassium

There are many foods besides fruits and vegetables that are sources of potassium. Some of these foods are listed below. If your potassium levels are high you may need to limit these foods as well. Many of these foods are also high in phosphorus.

Talk to your dietitian about whether these foods are all right for you to eat.

Grain Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher potassium choices are cereals made with whole bran such as Raisin Bran[®], All Bran[®], Fibre 1[®], and Bran Buds[®], as well as foods made with these cereals. If you need to lower your potassium, avoid whole grain products and chickpea flour rotis, or other foods made with chickpea flour. Lower potassium choices are white, 60% whole wheat, light rye, or sourdough breads.
Milk Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All milk products contain potassium. This includes fluid milks, soy beverages, yogurt, pudding, and ice cream. If you need to lower your potassium, limit all milk products to 1 cup (250 mL) or less per day.
Nuts and Seeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nuts, seeds, and nut butters are higher in potassium. If you need to lower your potassium: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use nuts, seeds, and nut butters sparingly Limit to 2 Tbsp (30 mL) per day or up to ½ cup (125 mL) in a recipe.
Beans and Lentils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beans (kidney, white, Lima, navy, pinto, soy), chickpeas, dried peas, and lentils are higher in potassium If you need to lower your potassium, limit to ½ cup (125 mL) cooked, once per week. Speak with your dietitian if you are vegetarian.
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black tea and coffee are higher in potassium. If you need to lower your potassium, limit to 2 to 3 cups (500 to 750 mL) per day.
Candy and Sweeteners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chocolate, pure maple syrup, chocolate/carob desserts, and foods that contain molasses are high in potassium. If you need to lower your potassium: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit chocolate to 15 grams (size of 1 mini chocolate bar) daily. Limit pure maple syrup to 1 Tbsp (15 mL) per day, if used at all. Limit chocolate or carob desserts such as chocolate cake to 1 serving per day. Limit foods that contain molasses such as gingersnaps to 1 serving per day. Limit your total high potassium candy and sweets to 1 serving per day
Other Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salt substitutes with potassium chloride, such as No-Salt[®] or Half-Salt[®], are higher in potassium. Limit or avoid these if you need to lower your potassium. Check the ingredient list on low sodium products. Many low sodium products contain potassium chloride. These foods will be higher in potassium.