

Potassium in Your Diet

Our bodies need the right amount of potassium every day to stay healthy. Different amounts of potassium are in many foods, including vegetables and fruits.

Some medicines and medical problems can cause too much or too little potassium in your body. This can make your heart beat too fast, beat too slow, or stop beating. You can't always feel these changes.

This handout tells you which foods are higher and lower in potassium, and can help you eat the right amount of potassium.

How much potassium can I have?

The amount of potassium you should eat depends on:

- your body size
- the medicine you take
- how much potassium is in your blood
- how well your kidneys are working

Ask your dietitian for more information about how many servings of higher and lower potassium foods are right for you every day.

If your blood potassium level is too high:

- Avoid vegetables and fruit that are higher in potassium.
- Choose 5–6 servings a day of vegetables and fruit that are lower in potassium.

If your blood potassium is usually in the normal range:

- Talk to your dietitian about the right amount of potassium foods for you.

If your blood potassium level is too low:

- Add higher potassium vegetables and fruit to your meals and snacks.
- Aim for 1–2 servings of higher potassium food choices every day.

Hidden potassium in packaged foods

Potassium is not always listed in the Nutrition Facts table on a food package.

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

Can you find the potassium in the ingredient list below?

Ingredients: Mushrooms, water, modified corn starch, canola oil, wheat flour, milk, buttermilk powder, salt, yeast extract, potassium chloride (salt substitute), protein isolate, onion powder, spices.

Potassium is in *potassium chloride*.

Serving size

A food can be high or low in potassium, depending on how it is prepared.

For example, ½ cup (125 mL) cooked spinach has more potassium than ½ cup (125 mL) raw spinach because spinach packs together more tightly when it's cooked.







The food lists on the next pages will help you eat the right amount of 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.



= Foods higher in sodium (salt). Limit these foods.

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

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





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

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	• goji berry (wolfberry)	• passion fruit juice	• sapota
• cantaloupe	• guava	• persimmon	• tangelo
• cherimoya	• jackfruit		

Caution:

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 vegetables and fruits that have potassium. If your potassium levels are high, you may need to limit these foods as well. The list below can help you make lower potassium choices from these groups.

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

Grain Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cereals made with whole bran such as bran flakes, raisin bran, granola, or muesli, and foods made with these cereals. <p>If you need to lower your potassium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid whole grain products, chickpea flour rotis, and other foods made with chickpea flour. Choose 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. <p>If you need to lower your potassium, limit all milk products to a total of 1 cup (250 mL) or less per day.</p>
Nuts, Nut Butters, and Seeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nuts, nut butters, and seeds are higher in potassium. <p>If you need to lower your potassium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use nuts, nut butters, seeds, and trail mix sparingly. Limit to 2 Tbsp (30 mL) a 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. <p>If you need to lower your potassium, limit these to ½ cup (125 mL) cooked, once a week. Speak with your dietitian if you are vegetarian.</p>
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black tea and coffee are higher in potassium. <p>If you need to lower your potassium, limit to 2–3 cups (500–750 mL) a day.</p>
Candy and Sweeteners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chocolate, pure maple syrup, chocolate/carob desserts, and foods that contain molasses are higher in potassium. <p>If you need to lower your potassium, eat no more than 1 a day of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chocolate: 15 grams (size of 1 mini chocolate bar) or pure maple syrup: 1 Tbsp (15 mL) or chocolate or carob desserts such as chocolate cake or foods that contain molasses such as gingersnaps
Other Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salt substitutes with potassium chloride are higher in potassium. Limit or avoid these if you need to lower your potassium. Check the ingredient list on food packages. Many low sodium foods contain potassium chloride, potassium acetate, or potassium lactate. Other foods may contain different potassium ingredients. These foods will be higher in potassium.