

# A guide to following a low potassium diet for people with kidney disease

**This leaflet is designed to offer advice on how to adjust your usual diet in order to control the potassium levels in your blood. If you need any further advice or if you have any questions, please contact your renal dietitian.**

## What is potassium?

Potassium is a mineral found in our bodies and in many foods and drinks. It is important for the functioning of nerves and muscle.

## Why is the amount of potassium in my blood too high?

The kidneys normally control the level of potassium in your blood but in kidney failure this control is lost.

## Why should I worry about the amount of potassium in my blood?

Having too much or too little potassium in the blood can be dangerous to the heart as it can stop it from beating.

## What can I do to help control my blood potassium levels?

If your blood potassium is too high, reducing your intake of potassium rich foods and changing your cooking methods can help control the level of potassium in your blood.

If you have diabetes, it is important that your blood sugars are well controlled. High blood sugars can increase the level of potassium in your blood.

Your dietitian will assess your diet. They will advise you on which foods to avoid or limit as well as provide suitable low potassium alternatives. They will also help you to plan meals based on foods you can have and enjoy. It is important to use the information in this leaflet in line with any other dietary advice you have received for example diabetes or a low phosphate diet.

## Cooking methods

The way you cook your food can affect its potassium content. Boiling potatoes and other vegetables in water allows some of the potassium to leak into the water and therefore reduces its potassium content.

To help reduce the potassium in your food, follow the steps below:

- Peel off the skin of potatoes.
- Cut potatoes and vegetables into small pieces.

- Boil them in plenty of water until soft, throwing away this water after use.
- Avoid using the cooking water to make soups, sauces, gravy or casseroles.
- Parboil potatoes before roasting or frying.
- Parboil vegetables before adding to casseroles or sauces.

When little or no water is used to cook potatoes or vegetables, most of the potassium stays in the food. Therefore you should:

- avoid using a microwave, steamer or pressure cooker for cooking potatoes and vegetables
- avoid stir-frying, roasting or steaming (unless the vegetables or potatoes have been parboiled first)

Microwaves can be used for reheating previously-cooked potatoes or vegetables.

## Potatoes, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

It is important to include starchy carbohydrates in your diet as they provide you with energy and fibre as well as vitamins and minerals.

Food	Reduce intake of	Lower potassium alternatives
Potato	<p>Baked/jacket, fried, roasted or steamed Cassava, plantain, potatoes, sweet potato, taro and yam</p> <p>Manufactured varieties such as Oven, microwave or shop-bought chips, hash browns, mashed potato including instant mash, potato waffles and wedges.</p> <p>Quinoa</p>	<p>Ensure all potato, cassava, sweet potatoes, yams, taro are boiled</p> <p>The boiled potatoes can then be mashed, roasted, fried etc</p> <p>Up to 150g potato (5oz or three egg-sized) can be included daily</p> <p>Home-made chips that are parboiled prior to cooking</p>
Rice, pasta and other grains		Pasta, rice, noodles, couscous, pastry, Yorkshire puddings and dumplings are low in potassium
Breakfast cereals	<p>Cereals containing bran, dried fruit, nuts or chocolate such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• muesli</li> <li>• All bran</li> <li>• sultana bran</li> <li>• Fruit and fibre</li> <li>• chocolate-coated cereals</li> <li>• instant/sachets eg Ready brek</li> </ul>	<p>Cereals that are free from bran, dried fruit, nuts and chocolates such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weetabix</li> <li>• Shredded wheat</li> <li>• Shreddies</li> <li>• porridge (not instant)</li> <li>• cornflakes</li> <li>• Rice crispies</li> <li>• Cheerios</li> </ul>
Breads	Breads containing nuts, seeds or dried fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• white, granary, wholemeal breads and rolls</li> <li>• pitta breads</li> <li>• tortilla wraps</li> <li>• bagels</li> <li>• crumpets</li> <li>• English muffins</li> <li>• croissants</li> </ul>

## Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables provide us with a wide variety of vitamins and minerals and are a good source of energy and fibre. However, some are also high in potassium. It is therefore important to choose the lower potassium options.

### Fruit

It is important to eat no more than two to three portions of fruit containing low to medium levels of potassium per day.

A portion of fruit is 80g (3oz). This is the equivalent of approximately a handful e.g. one apple, two heaped tablespoons of blueberries, one peach or two clementines.

Low Potassium	Moderate Potassium	Avoid: High Potassium	Avoid: Very high potassium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apple (1 small)</li> <li>• blueberries (1 small cup)</li> <li>• cherries (80g canned)</li> <li>• clementine (2 small)</li> <li>• cranberries (1 small cup)</li> <li>• fruit cocktail (80g canned)</li> <li>• fruit pie filling (80g)</li> <li>• gooseberries ( 3 stewed)</li> <li>• grapefruit* (1/3 small)</li> <li>• guava (80g canned)</li> <li>• lemon (1 small)</li> <li>• lime (1 small)</li> <li>• loganberries (80g canned)</li> <li>• lychees (6 small)</li> <li>• mandarins (80g canned)</li> <li>• mango (80g canned)</li> <li>• mixed peel (80g)</li> <li>• nectarine (1)</li> <li>• orange ( 1/2 )</li> <li>• papaya (80g canned)</li> <li>• passion fruit (pulp of 3 fruits)</li> <li>• peach (1 small)</li> <li>• pear (1/2 medium or 1 small)</li> <li>• pineapple (canned) (2 rings/6 chunks)</li> <li>• plums (80g canned)</li> <li>• pomelo (80g)</li> <li>• raspberries (80g canned)</li> <li>• rhubarb (80g canned)</li> <li>• satsuma (1 medium/ 2 small)</li> <li>• strawberries (80g canned)</li> <li>• tangerine (1 medium/2 small)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apricot (80g canned)</li> <li>• blackberries (15)</li> <li>• blackcurrant (80g canned)</li> <li>• cherries (4 fresh)</li> <li>• fig (fresh)(1 1/2 )</li> <li>• kumquats (80g)</li> <li>• mango (2 slices)</li> <li>• melon (1/2 slice)</li> <li>• papaya (1/2 slice)</li> <li>• peaches (80g canned)</li> <li>• pineapples (fresh) (1 large slice)</li> <li>• plums (80g stewed)</li> <li>• pomegranate (1/4)</li> <li>• quince (80g)</li> <li>• raspberries (15)</li> <li>• strawberries (6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apricot (fresh)</li> <li>• blackcurrant (stewed)</li> <li>• damson</li> <li>• gooseberries (raw)</li> <li>• grapes</li> <li>• greengage</li> <li>• guava</li> <li>• kiwi</li> <li>• loganberries</li> <li>• physalis (cape gooseberry)</li> <li>• plums</li> <li>• prunes (canned)</li> <li>• redcurrants</li> <li>• rhubarb</li> <li>• Sharon fruit</li> <li>• white currants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apricot (dried)</li> <li>• avocado</li> <li>• banana</li> <li>• blackcurrant (raw)</li> <li>• coconut</li> <li>• currants (dried)</li> <li>• dates</li> <li>• dried fruit mix</li> <li>• fig (dried)</li> <li>• prunes (dried)</li> <li>• raisins</li> <li>• sultanas</li> </ul>

If you are having any tinned fruit, ensure that any juice is drained. Star fruit can cause dangerous side effects in people with kidney problems; therefore it is recommended that you avoid this.

\* You may be advised to avoid grapefruit if you are taking certain medications, please check with your doctor if you are unsure.

## Vegetables

It is important to eat no more than two to three portions of vegetables containing low to medium levels of potassium per day.

A portion of vegetables is 80g (3oz). This is the equivalent of two heaped tablespoons.

Low potassium	Moderate potassium	Avoid – High potassium	Avoid – Very high potassium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• beansprouts (4 tbsp raw)</li> <li>• cabbage (2 tbsp boiled)</li> <li>• carrots (2 medium boiled)</li> <li>• cauliflower (8 florets boiled)</li> <li>• chickpeas (80g canned)</li> <li>• corn on the cob (½ boiled)</li> <li>• cucumber (a 2 inch piece)</li> <li>• gherkins (80g pickled)</li> <li>• green/French beans (80g canned)</li> <li>• leeks (½ boiled)</li> <li>• marrow (80g boiled)</li> <li>• mixed vegetables (80g frozen)</li> <li>• mushrooms (80g canned)</li> <li>• mustard and cress (2 punnets raw)</li> <li>• olives (80g canned/jar)</li> <li>• onions (4 medium boiled or pickled)</li> <li>• sugar snap peas (18 raw/boiled/stir-fried)</li> <li>• peas (2 tbsp frozen or canned)</li> <li>• pepper (½ red or green raw)</li> <li>• pumpkin (80g boiled)</li> <li>• runner beans (3 tbsp boiled)</li> <li>• squash - spaghetti type (80g boiled)</li> <li>• swede (80g boiled)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• asparagus (3 spears boiled)</li> <li>• aubergine (¼ fried)</li> <li>• beetroot (3 baby whole or 7 slices)</li> <li>• broad beans (80g fresh/canned/boiled)</li> <li>• broccoli (2 spears boiled)</li> <li>• celery (2-3 sticks boiled)</li> <li>• chicory (80g raw)</li> <li>• coleslaw (2 tbsp raw)</li> <li>• courgette (1 medium boiled)</li> <li>• curly kale (3 tbsp boiled)</li> <li>• green/French beans (3 tablespoons)</li> <li>• kohlrabi (80g boiled)</li> <li>• lentils red (2 tbsp boiled)</li> <li>• lettuce (16 small leaves raw)</li> <li>• mange tout (18 boiled/raw/fried)</li> <li>• mixed vegetables (80g canned)</li> <li>• mooli (80g raw)</li> <li>• onions (1 medium raw)</li> <li>• peas (mushy) (80g)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• artichoke (boiled)</li> <li>• baked beans</li> <li>• blackeye beans (boiled)</li> <li>• Brussels sprouts (boiled)</li> <li>• butter beans (canned)</li> <li>• butternut squash (baked)</li> <li>• cabbage (raw)</li> <li>• celeriac (boiled)</li> <li>• celery (raw)</li> <li>• chickpeas (dried)</li> <li>• chilli beans (canned)</li> <li>• courgette (raw)</li> <li>• fennel (boiled)</li> <li>• kidney beans (canned)</li> <li>• lentils green/brown (boiled)</li> <li>• mung beans (boiled)</li> <li>• mushrooms (raw/fried)</li> <li>• okra (boiled)</li> <li>• onions (fried)</li> <li>• parsnips (boiled)</li> <li>• radicchio (raw)</li> <li>• split peas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aduki beans</li> <li>• artichoke</li> <li>• bamboo shoots (canned)</li> <li>• beetroot (fresh)</li> <li>• chard, swiss</li> <li>• endive</li> <li>• mushrooms (dried)</li> <li>• pak choi</li> <li>• pinto beans</li> <li>• soya beans</li> <li>• spinach (raw)</li> <li>• sundried tomatoes</li> <li>• tomato puree</li> </ul>

continued

Low potassium	Moderate potassium	Avoid – high potassium	Avoid – very high potassium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water chestnuts (80g canned)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pepper (½ yellow raw)</li> <li>• potato salad (½ pot)</li> <li>• radish (10 raw)</li> <li>• salsify (80g boiled)</li> <li>• shallots (3 small raw)</li> <li>• spinach (80g boiled)</li> <li>• spring greens ( 3 tbsp boiled)</li> <li>• squash (all summer types – 80g boiled)</li> <li>• sweetcorn (baby/canned/frozen 5 teaspoons)</li> <li>• tomato (80g canned)</li> <li>• turnip (⅔ boiled)</li> <li>• watercress (raw) (1 small cereal/ dessert bowl)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• split peas</li> <li>• spinach (frozen then boiled)</li> <li>• spring onions</li> <li>• tomato (raw)</li> </ul>	

## Milk and dairy products

Milk and dairy products are a good source of protein and minerals. Some dairy products can be high in potassium and would therefore need to be limited.

Food	Reduce intake of	Lower potassium alternative
Milk	<p>Soya, goat and cow's milk are all high in potassium.</p> <p>Milk should be limited to no more than 300mls (½ pint) per day.</p>	Oat/almond or rice milk
Dairy products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chocolate flavoured products</li> <li>• dried skimmed milk powder</li> <li>• condensed or evaporated milk</li> <li>• yoghurts containing nuts, dried fruit, seeds or chocolate</li> </ul>	<p>All cheeses are low in potassium (however be careful if you are also following a low phosphate diet).</p> <p>Crème fraiche</p>

## Meat, fish and other protein

This food group is the main source of protein in our diet. It is important for growth and continuous replacement of body tissue, including building and maintaining muscles. They also provide us with a variety of vitamins and minerals.

Food	Reduce intake of	Lower potassium alternative
Beans and pulses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aduki beans</li> <li>• baked beans</li> <li>• black gram beans</li> <li>• blackeye beans</li> <li>• butter beans</li> <li>• lentils (<i>brown, green</i>)</li> <li>• mung beans</li> <li>• red kidney beans</li> <li>• soya beans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chickpeas (<i>canned</i>)</li> <li>• hummus</li> </ul>
Meat, fish and eggs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meat and poultry – all types</li> <li>• fish and sea food – all types</li> <li>• eggs</li> <li>• Quorn</li> <li>• tofu</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nuts</li> <li>• seeds</li> </ul>	

Beans and pulses are a good source of protein but they can be high in potassium. If you are vegetarian or vegan please let your renal dietitian know. If you are vegetarian or vegan limit to \_\_\_\_ portions of beans and pulses per day.

## Snacks and desserts

This food group is high in fat and sugar and does not provide you with many other nutrients so try to limit them to an occasional treat unless advised otherwise by your dietitian.

Food	Reduce intake of:	Lower potassium alternatives
Savoury snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• potato based crisps</li> <li>• vegetable crisps</li> <li>• nuts and seeds</li> <li>• dried fruit</li> <li>• bombay mix</li> <li>• Twiglets</li> <li>• oatcakes</li> <li>• poppadom</li> <li>• rye crispbread</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bread sticks</li> <li>• crackers – cream, water,</li> <li>• wholemeal</li> <li>• croissant</li> <li>• crumpet</li> <li>• dumpling</li> <li>• English muffin</li> <li>• maize/corn-based snacks</li> <li>• pancake</li> <li>• popcorn</li> <li>• prawn crackers</li> <li>• pretzels</li> <li>• rice-based snacks eg snack a jacks, rice cakes</li> <li>• wheat-based eg Sunbites</li> <li>• Yorkshire pudding</li> </ul>

continued

Food	Reduce intake of:	Lower potassium alternatives
Biscuits and cakes	All cakes, biscuits or cereal bars that contain dried fruit, nuts or chocolate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• biscuits eg cream-filled,</li> <li>• digestive, gingernut, rich tea, shortbread</li> <li>• cream/jam filled biscuits</li> <li>• wafers</li> <li>• plain cake eg iced,</li> <li>• Madeira, muffin, sponge</li> <li>• doughnuts</li> <li>• jam tarts</li> <li>• swiss roll</li> </ul>
Confectionery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chocolate</li> <li>• toffee</li> <li>• fudge</li> <li>• confectionery containing fruit or nuts</li> <li>• liquorice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• boiled sweets</li> <li>• jelly sweets</li> <li>• fruit pastilles/gums</li> <li>• marshmallow</li> <li>• mints</li> <li>• turkish delight</li> <li>• candied popcorn</li> </ul>
Puddings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All puddings containing dried fruit/nuts/chocolate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lemon meringue</li> <li>• jam/treacle pudding</li> <li>• fruit pie/crumble/ Pavlova/ cheesecake (using low potassium fruit)</li> </ul>

## Drinks and alcohol

It is important that you ensure your intake is within your fluid allowance and that you follow your medical team's advice regarding alcohol intake.

Food	Reduce intake of:	Lower potassium alternatives
Non-alcoholic drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fruit juices</li> <li>• hi juice squashes</li> <li>• fruit or vegetable smoothies</li> <li>• drinking chocolate/cocoa</li> <li>• malted drinks eg Horlicks/Ovaltine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• barley water</li> <li>• camp or barley cup coffee</li> <li>• cordials, squash</li> <li>• energy drinks eg Redbull, Relentless</li> <li>• fizzy drinks eg lemonade</li> <li>• flavoured water</li> <li>• soda water</li> <li>• tonic water</li> <li>• tea – all types</li> <li>• water</li> </ul>
Alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• beer/lager</li> <li>• cider</li> <li>• port</li> <li>• sherry</li> <li>• stout</li> <li>• wine/Champagne/sparkling wine</li> </ul>	Spirits eg rum, whiskey, vodka, brandy, gin

## Other food

Food	Reduce intake of	Lower potassium alternatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• salt substitutes eg LoSalt, So Lo</li> <li>• Marmite/ Bovril/ Vegemite</li> <li>• tomato puree</li> <li>• tomato ketchup</li> <li>• soups</li> <li>• Worcestershire sauce</li> <li>• brown sauce</li> <li>• black treacle</li> <li>• peanut butter</li> <li>• chocolate spread</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• herbs, spices and garlic</li> <li>• pepper, vinegar, mustard, pickle</li> <li>• mayonnaise/salad cream</li> <li>• horseradish sauce</li> <li>• mint Sauce</li> <li>• apple sauce</li> <li>• gravy granules</li> <li>• curry powder</li> <li>• golden syrup or honey</li> <li>• lemon curd, jam or marmalade</li> </ul>

If you are also following trying to control your blood sugar levels, it is important to also limit your intake of high sugar foods even if they are in the low potassium section.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us on:

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