



Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# WHAT CAN I EAT IF I AM FOLLOWING A RENAL DIET?

**Information for patients  
and carers**



**Oxford Kidney Unit**

Eating a varied diet is important, as it helps to keep us healthy and makes meal times more enjoyable.

If you have problems with your kidneys, you may have been advised to change your diet so that it contains less potassium, phosphate and salt. This is sometimes referred to as a 'renal diet'. Being asked to make these changes can often make meal choices feel limited and leave you wondering what you can eat.

This leaflet will provide you with information about following a 'renal diet' whilst making sure food and drink are still enjoyable and varied.

## **The Eatwell Guide For A Renal Diet**

The Eatwell guide (shown opposite) is an easy way of seeing how much of each food group we should be eating to achieve a healthy balanced diet.



The following sections will help to explain the importance of each food group and the better choices to make for each group.

## CARBOHYDRATE

Carbohydrate is an important source of energy. Just over one third of what we eat should come from this food group.

### Good options to choose include:

- rice
- pasta
- breads (without nuts, seeds or fruit)
- bagels
- croissants
- noodles
- dumplings
- tortilla wraps (corn or flour)
- cereals. Pick those that do not contain dried fruit, nuts or chocolate. Good options include porridge, cornflakes, Rice Krispies, Weetabix, shredded wheat, Special K and Cheerios.
- Potatoes. Have these only occasionally and make sure that they are boiled in plenty of water, which is then thrown away. This will help to remove some of the potassium from the potatoes. You can always bake, fry, mash or roast them afterwards for variety.



# FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Fruit and vegetables contain a variety of vitamins and minerals and are a good source of fibre. We should be aiming for 5 portions each day.

You can choose fresh, tinned or frozen produce.

## Good choices of fruit are:

- apples
- pears
- peaches
- clementines
- nectarines
- mandarins
- blueberries
- plums
- satsumas
- raspberries
- watermelon.

## Good choices of vegetables and salads are:

- broccoli
- carrots
- cabbage
- cauliflower
- cucumber
- leeks
- runner beans
- peppers
- peas
- swede
- lettuce.



Remember to boil your vegetables in plenty of water and throw it away. This will help to remove some of the potassium from the vegetables.

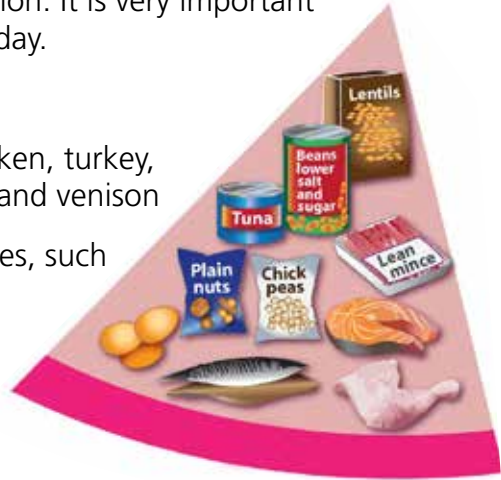
For a more detailed list of suitable fruits and vegetables, please ask your dietitian for the 'Low potassium' diet sheet.

# PROTEIN

Protein is important for our cells, organs and muscles to work properly. It also helps us to fight infection. It is very important that we have protein in our diet each day.

## Good options are:

- fresh meat and poultry, such as chicken, turkey, beef, lamb, pork, duck, rabbit, veal and venison
- fresh, unprocessed fish without bones, such as cod, haddock, tuna and salmon
- some seafood, such as crab sticks, scallops and winkles
- eggs
- plant-based protein, such as chickpeas, soya mince, meat substitutes (e.g. Quorn), tofu, lentils and black-eyed beans.



# DAIRY OR DAIRY ALTERNATIVES

Dairy products, such as milk, cheese and yogurts, are a good source of protein and calcium, which is important for bone health. Unless you are aiming to gain weight, you should choose lower-fat and lower-sugar options.

Some helpful tips on how you can include different types of dairy in your diet are explained below.

## Milk

All milk contains potassium and phosphate. This includes full fat, semi-skimmed and skimmed milk. You may have been advised by your dietitian to reduce the amount of milk in your diet.

Other options to cow's milk include:

- rice, soya and oat milk (organic or unfortified varieties).

## Cheese

Hard cheeses such as cheddar, Edam and Red Leicester are high in phosphate. Better options include:

- cream cheese
- cottage cheese
- mozzarella
- feta
- brie
- Stilton.

If you do have hard cheeses, then good ways to help reduce the quantity used include:

- grating the cheese instead of having slices or chunks
- using mature cheeses, as just a little can still add lots of flavour.

## Yoghurts

Good substitutes to standard yoghurt include:

- fromage frais
- crème caramel
- soya yogurt.



# FATS

Fat is an essential part of our diet and any type of fat is okay to have when following a renal diet. However, to avoid increasing your risk of heart disease, it is better to opt for unsaturated fats. These include:

- vegetable oil/spreads
- rapeseed oil/spreads
- olive oil/spreads
- sunflower oil/spreads.

All types of fat are high in energy, so if you are trying to lose weight, you should try to reduce the amount of fat you use.





# FOODS HIGH IN FAT, SUGAR AND SALT

Foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt, such as crisps, chocolate, biscuits and cakes, can be included in your diet. However, because they do not contain good nutrients, they should only be included in small amounts occasionally.



## **Better savoury snack options include:**

- bread sticks
- corn or maize based crisps, such as Wotsits, Quavers, Skips and Monster Munch
- cream crackers
- plain popcorn
- prawn crackers.

If you want to reduce your salt intake, try having Salt 'n' Shake crisps (without adding the salt sachet).

## **Better sweet snacks include:**

- jelly sweets
- fruit gums
- marshmallows
- Turkish delight
- mints
- doughnuts
- shortbread
- ginger biscuits
- rich tea biscuits
- digestive biscuits.

If you do fancy some chocolate, opt for chocolate coated varieties such as a Kit Kats or chocolate digestives.

**Better pudding choices include:**

- Victoria sponge
- meringue/pavlova
- pastry
- treacle tart
- lemon pie
- apple crumble.

Instead of adding custard or ice-cream to your puddings, try having cream or crème fraiche.

**SAUCES**

Jars of sauces and packets of seasoning are often high in salt. Try using herbs and spices to add flavour to your meals instead. If you are unsure which herbs and spices work best for your meals, ask your dietitian for the 'Reducing salt intake for renal patients' diet sheet.

If you do want to use a stock, use reduced salt varieties or baby stock-cubes instead.

# FLUID

Your doctor, dietitian or nurse will tell you the amount of fluid you are allowed to have each day.



## Good options for drinks include:

- water, including tap water and sparkling or still bottled water
- cordial or squashes
- light-coloured fizzy drinks, such as lemonade, orangeade, Sprite and 7-up.
- tea, including caffeinated and decaffeinated.

If you are on haemodialysis there is another leaflet available which gives you more information on managing your fluid balance. Ask your dialysis nurse if you would like a copy.

## ALCOHOL

Alcohol can be included as part of a balanced diet. Men and women are advised to drink no more than 14 units of alcohol a week and to have some alcohol free days.

Although the units of alcohol will depend upon the strength of the drink, the guide below will help you see how many units are in typical drinks:

- single measure of spirits (25ml) = 1 unit
- small glass of wine (125ml) = 1.5 units
- 1 bottle of beer/lager (330 ml) = 1.7 units
- 1 pint of lager/beer/cider = 2-3 units

It is important that any alcohol you drink is included in your fluid allowance.

## Better options include:

- spirits, including gin, vodka and whiskey.

# HOW TO CONTACT US

If you would like further information about anything in this leaflet, the renal dietitians will be available in the morning during your clinic appointment or can see you when you come for dialysis. Please ask the receptionist to let the dietitian know you would like to talk with them.

Tel: **01865 225 061**

(8.00am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

(Please leave a message on the answerphone)

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.



Author: Renal Dietitian Team

Reviewed by the Renal Patient Information Group, July 2018

July 2019

Review: July 2022

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)

*Making a difference across our hospitals*

[charity@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:charity@ouh.nhs.uk) | 01865 743 444 | [hospitalcharity.co.uk](http://hospitalcharity.co.uk)

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

