



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

REDUCING POTASSIUM IN YOUR DIET

Information for patients



Oxford Kidney Unit

Your kidney team may have advised you to reduce the amount of potassium that you eat in your diet. This leaflet will give you information on how to do this and where to get further support.

Potassium is a mineral found naturally in many foods. When working well, kidneys are able to remove any extra potassium from your blood. However, when your kidneys are not working properly, this can lead to a build-up of potassium in your blood. **A high level of potassium in your blood can be dangerous for your heart.**

Your kidney team will check your potassium level every time you have a blood test. You may not have any symptoms of high potassium until the level becomes dangerously high. Even if you don't have any symptoms, high potassium must be treated, as there is always a risk that it could cause your heart to beat abnormally. This is life threatening.

Your potassium level should be between 3.5 and 5.5mmol/l (if on dialysis it should be between 3.5 and 5.9mmol/l.)

By reducing food and drink high in potassium, your level should come down to within a normal range. However, other factors, such as constipation and medications, can also cause your potassium level to rise. If you think that you may be suffering from constipation, please speak with your kidney team. They will review all of the tablets you are taking and may suggest a different medication.

The following information will help you choose foods and drink lower in potassium. **Choose more foods and drink from the 'lower potassium alternatives' column and fewer from the 'high potassium foods' column.**

Resources are also available for ethnic foods (Chinese, South Asian, and Afro-Caribbean). Please speak to your dietitian if you require these (see page 11 for contact details).

Fruit and vegetables

Aim to have 4-5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

For the higher potassium foods, the dietitian will advise you what you can eat. This will depend on your current dietary intake.

Fruit

Higher potassium foods	Lower potassium alternatives (1 piece each, unless otherwise stated)
Apricot Avocado Bananas Blackcurrants Mango Orange Cantaloupe/honeydew melon Coconut Figs Gooseberries Prunes Rhubarb Greengages Lychees Star fruit All dried fruit, e.g. raisin, sultanas, prunes, dates All fruit juices	Apple Peach/nectarine Pear Pineapple (1 slice) Clementine/mandarin/satsuma/tangerine Kiwi (small) Plum (medium) Blueberries (80g/handful) Cherries (80g/handful) Grapes (80g/handful) Strawberries (80g/handful) Raspberries (80g/handful) Watermelon Grapefruit (½)* All tinned fruit (with juice or syrup drained off) *To be avoided with certain medications. Ask your pharmacist if unsure.

Vegetables

All vegetables should be boiled, rather than steamed or microwaved. Boiling allows some of the potassium to leach into the water. This should be thrown away, **not** used for gravy or stock.

Vegetables can be blanched by boiling for approximately 1 minute, then draining before using in stir fries, casseroles, stews, curries and soups.

Higher potassium foods	Lower potassium alternatives (Portion sizes as below)
Asparagus	Beansprouts (4 tablespoons)
Artichoke	Broccoli (2 spears)
Aubergine	Cabbage (2 handfuls)
Baked beans	Carrots (3 tablespoons)
Beetroot	Cauliflower (6 florets)
Broad beans	Cress
Brussels sprouts	Cucumber (3cm)
Celery	French beans (3 tablespoons)
Okra (ladies fingers)	Lettuce (1 small bowl)
Parsnips	Marrow (3 tablespoons)
Spinach	Olives (20)
Dried vegetables	Peas, boiled (3 tablespoons)
Can be used in small amounts as part of a dish:	Peppers (capsicum) (½)
Mushrooms	Runner beans (3 tablespoons)
Onions/spring onions	Sugar snap peas/mangetout (3 tablespoons)
Sweetcorn	Swede (3 tablespoons)
Tomatoes (use to flavour)	Turnip (½)
	All tinned vegetables (with water drained off)

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates, also known as starchy foods, are a good source of energy, fibre and vitamins.

Starchy root vegetables are high in potassium, so should be limited to one portion per day or less. Other starchy foods based on wheat or rice are low in potassium and are good alternatives.

Potato, sweet potato, yam and cassava need to be boiled in plenty of water to reduce their potassium content. Discard the water after boiling and do **not** use the water for soups and sauces.

Keeping the skins on potatoes provide a good source of fibre and B vitamins. However, if your potassium levels are consistently high, peel your potatoes before boiling to help further reduce the potassium content.

Higher potassium foods	Lower potassium alternatives
<p>Steamed, jacket or instant mashed potatoes</p> <p>Frozen, oven, microwave, chip shop chips</p> <p>Manufactured potato products, e.g. hash browns, potato waffles, potato wedges, frozen roast potatoes, potato croquettes</p> <p>Breads containing nuts, seeds, dried fruit</p> <p>Naan bread (limit to 80g or ½ piece per day)</p> <p>Cereals containing bran, dried fruit, nuts and chocolate, e.g. muesli, All Bran, Bran Buds, Sultana Bran, Weetos, Fruit and Fibre, Grape Nuts, Chocolate Crisp</p>	<p>150g (3 egg sized) boiled potato, sweet potato, yam, cassava, which can then be mashed, roasted or fried</p> <p>White or wholemeal bread or rolls</p> <p>Pitta bread, tortilla wraps</p> <p>English muffins, bagels, crumpets, croissants, pancakes</p> <p>Garlic bread</p> <p>Yorkshire pudding</p> <p>Rice</p> <p>Pasta/noodles</p> <p>Couscous</p> <p>Polenta</p> <p>Sago, tapioca, semolina</p> <p>Millet</p> <p>All flours, except potato flour</p> <p>Plain cereals, e.g. Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Shreddies, cornflakes, Frosties, Special K, Rice Krispies, Cheerios, puffed wheat, honey puffs</p> <p>Porridge</p>

Meat, fish and vegetarian alternatives

These foods are an important source of protein, which is necessary for growth and repair and the building and maintaining of muscle.

Higher potassium foods	Lower potassium alternatives – your dietitian will let you know the portion size you should eat
<p>Nuts Seeds</p>	<p>Meat (all types) Poultry (all types) Fish and seafood</p> <p>Vegetarian Eggs Quorn Soy protein (textured vegetable protein) Tofu</p> <p>Pulses such as lentils, chickpeas and kidney beans can be eaten in place of meat or fish as a vegetarian meal.</p>

Dairy foods

Higher potassium foods	Lower potassium alternatives
<p>Evaporated milk Condensed milk Milk powders (e.g. Marvel)</p>	<p>Milk (½ pint or 300ml a day) <i>whole, semi-skimmed, skimmed, goat's, soya, lactose-free, almond milk</i></p> <p>OR 125g pot of fruit/plain yoghurt or fromage frais and 100ml milk</p> <p>Rice and oat milk, crème fraiche and all types of cream may be eaten freely in addition to your milk allowance.</p>

Sweet foods: Puddings, desserts, cakes, biscuits, sweets

If you have diabetes, you may need to limit your intake of sugary foods and drinks.

Higher potassium foods	Lower potassium alternatives
<p>Those containing chocolate, cocoa, dried fruit, coconut or nuts, e.g. fruit cake, banana split, bread and butter pudding (unless containing very little dried fruit), banoffee pie, Christmas pudding, chocolate cake, chocolate mousse, chocolate sauce</p> <p>Chocolate bars, carob Toffee, fudge Liquorice Marzipan</p>	<p>Fruit pie/crumble (within fruit allowance) Cheesecake Pavlova, meringue, trifle, jelly Milk puddings, custard Mousse (non-chocolate) Victoria/madeira sponge, Swiss roll Plain scones, iced buns, jam tarts Doughnuts, Danish pastry/apple slice</p> <p>Plain biscuits (digestive, Rich Tea, Marie, etc.) Iced, cream or jam-filled biscuits Shortbread, wafers</p> <p>Boiled/chewy/jelly sweets, fruit pastilles Marshmallows, mints, candied popcorn Turkish delight (non-chocolate)</p>

Savoury snacks: crackers, crisps, nuts

Crisps can be high in potassium. Potato and root vegetables, such as parsnip and beetroot, are naturally high in potassium, so it is better to have lower potassium alternatives.

Higher potassium foods	Lower potassium alternatives
Potato/root vegetable crisps Nuts Seeds	Corn/maize snacks, e.g. tortilla chips Rice snacks, e.g. Snack-a-jacks, rice cakes Wheat snacks Popcorn, pretzels, breadsticks Cream crackers, crispbreads, water biscuits Check the ingredients and avoid varieties containing potassium chloride

Beverages

Higher potassium drinks	Lower potassium alternatives
Coffee Fruit and vegetable juices, smoothies Ribena, hi-juice squashes Drinking chocolate, Bovril, Complan/Meritene Beer, lager, cider, Sherry, port Vermouth Wine/champagne	Water Camp coffee 1 weak cup of coffee a day Tea Squash/cordial Fizzy soft drinks (lemonade, Lucozade) Ginger beer Tonic water, soda water Spirits (e.g. gin, whiskey, brandy, vodka)

Seasonings, spreads/butter, sauces

Higher potassium foods	Lower potassium alternatives
<p>Black treacle Peanut butter Chocolate spread Brown sauce Tomato ketchup Tomato puree, passata Marmite/Bovril/Oxo/Vegemite</p> <p>Salt substitutes contain potassium instead of sodium so it is important these are avoided: Lo-Salt, So-Lo, low sodium salt</p>	<p>All herbs and spices Pepper All chilli sauces, curry powder Garlic Vinegar Mayonnaise/salad cream Mustard, mint sauce, apple sauce Pickle Gravy granules/powder Jam/marmalade Honey, lemon curd</p>

MEAL IDEAS

When making dishes such as stir fries, stews, curries and pies, you can use a mixture of lower potassium vegetables with a small amount of onion and mushrooms. Blanching your vegetables in boiling water for 1 minute before using in cooking will also help reduce the potassium content.

Pasta sauce

If making a tomato-based sauce, use less tomato than you usually would. Use tinned tomatoes rather than tomato paste, puree or passata. Flavour the sauce with garlic and herbs as well as lower potassium vegetables (see page 4).

Soup

Packet and tinned soups are high in salt and potassium. To reduce the salt and potassium content you could make your own.

Make a meat or chicken stock or use a ready-made low salt stock, such as Kallo or baby food stock cubes. You can use rice, barley or mini pasta shapes to give it body and cornflour can be used to thicken. Choose lower potassium vegetables (see page 4), blanch them and drain before adding to the stock. Flavour with black pepper and herbs.

Eating out

You can still enjoy eating out, although you may need to plan ahead. For more information, please ask for a copy of our leaflet 'Eating out advice for people following a renal diet'.

HOW CAN I CONTACT A DIETITIAN?

Oxford Renal Dietitians

Tel: **01865 225 061**

(8.00am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

Please leave a message on the answerphone and a dietitian will call you back the next working day.

Oxford Renal Clinics

If you are seeing a kidney doctor, the dietitians are available in the Renal Outpatient clinic at the Churchill Hospital each morning. Please speak to the receptionist if you would like to be seen.

Renal Satellite Unit Clinics

Some of these clinics are covered by a dietitian. Please ask the receptionist if you would like to be seen.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Oxford Kidney Unit

Useful information about the Oxford Kidney Unit for patients and relatives.

Website: **www.ouh.nhs.uk/oku**

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.



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