

How To Eat When You Have Kidney Disease

Why Eating Well is Important

Healthy kidneys remove waste products and extra fluid from your blood. When your kidneys are not able to remove all of the waste products and fluid, the level of waste in your bloodstream rises. This can be harmful and make you feel ill.

Eating well is important to control the buildup of waste products in your body. When your kidneys are not working well, there may be changes you will need to make to your diet.

Protein

If you are not on dialysis, you may need to limit the amount of protein you eat. If you are on dialysis, you need to eat more protein to replace losses from dialysis.

High protein foods include:

- beef, pork, lamb, venison
- chicken
- eggs
- fish such as tuna and shellfish
- legumes including beans, peas and lentils
- nuts and nut butters
- tofu.

If you are on dialysis, the protein serving is the size of your palm. If you are not on dialysis, the protein serving is $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ the size of your palm.

Sodium

When kidneys fail, extra sodium can cause fluid to build up. This makes you feel short of breath and increases blood pressure.

To consume less sodium:

- Do not add salt to your food. Use other herbs and spices in place of the salt shaker.
- Read food labels for sodium content. Try to limit sodium intake to less than 2300 mg a day.
- Eat fewer high-sodium foods such as:
 - processed meats (ham, bacon, sausage, bologna)
 - convenience foods such as canned or dried soups, frozen TV dinners, macaroni and cheese, boxed dinners
 - fast food
 - pickles and olives
 - soy sauce
 - salty snack foods such as pretzels and chips.

Important: Only use salt substitutes if your health care provider or dietitian says it is OK. Many salt substitutes are high in potassium.

Liquids

You may need to limit the amount of liquid that you drink. Ask your health care provider how much liquid you should drink each day

Phosphorus

When your kidneys are not working well, phosphorus levels can build up in your blood. High levels can pull calcium from your bones, causing them to become weak and break. High phosphorus levels may also cause itching and bone pain. You may need to limit the amount of phosphorus in your diet.

To consume less phosphorus limit:

- processed foods such as boxed macaroni and cheese, boxed pancake mix, American cheese and canned soups
- processed meats such as bacon, salami and hot dogs
- dark-colored sodas, sports drinks, some flavored waters, milk and energy drinks.

Your health care provider may also prescribe a phosphorus binder to “soak up” extra phosphorus in your stomach.

Potassium

When kidneys fail, potassium can build up. Extra potassium can cause muscle weakness and changes in your heart rhythm. It may also cause your heart to stop beating.

To consume less potassium do not eat (or eat very little) of the following:

- **fruits:** bananas, avocados, oranges and orange juice, nectarines, dates, prunes, raisins and apricots
- **vegetables:** potatoes, tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato juice (including V8®), Brussels sprouts, dark greens (spinach, Swiss chard, collard greens), pumpkin, sweet potatoes, yams and winter squashes.

Sample Menu

■ Breakfast

- 2 scrambled eggs
- 2 slices toast with 1 teaspoon butter
- ½ cup low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt
- ½ cup strawberries
- coffee or tea

■ Lunch

- 2 ounces roasted chicken on bun with lettuce and 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 cup raw carrots and celery
- 6 ounces cranberry juice

■ Dinner

- 3-ounce pork chop
- ½ to 1 cup rice with 1 teaspoon butter
- ½ cup cooked green beans
- 1 medium apple or ½ cup applesauce
- 6 ounces sparkling water

Whom to Call With Questions

Call your health care provider or dietitian if you have questions.