

What is potassium and why do I need to eat less?

What is potassium?

Potassium is a mineral found in food and drinks. It plays a role in keeping your heart beat regular and your nerves and muscles working right.

Why do I need to eat less potassium?

Healthy kidneys keep the right amount of potassium in the body. When your kidneys are not working properly, potassium levels in your blood can become high. High levels of potassium in your blood can be dangerous for your heart.

There are several reasons why the level of potassium in your blood can be high. Eating and drinking too much potassium from food and drinks can cause the level of potassium in your blood to be high.

How can I eat less potassium?

Choose foods that are lower in potassium instead of foods that are higher in potassium. You may be able to eat foods that are higher in potassium in small amounts.

Use the information on the next pages to help you eat less potassium.

The renal dietitians are here to help you. Do not hesitate to contact us if you need support.

Dietitian:

Contact:



How can I eat less potassium?

1. Eat a variety of foods

All foods contain potassium. Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables, protein foods, dairy and alternatives and starchy foods. Following the recommended number of serves and serving sizes will help you manage the amount of potassium you eat.

2. Use cooking methods that reduce the potassium in food

Cut vegetables into small pieces

Boil vegetables and legumes in water

Drain and throw out water after cooking

3. Limit snack foods that are high in potassium

Snack foods such as potato chips, bhujia mix, chocolate, dried fruit and nuts are high in potassium.

4. Choose drinks that are low in potassium

Choose water, tea, instant coffee, cordial such as Thriftee and Vitafresh. Limit drinks high in potassium such as fruit and vegetable juice, coconut water, sports drinks, smoothies, milky drinks, espresso coffee, flat white, cappuccino, latte, beer and wine.

5. Eat less processed foods

Processed foods such as instant noodles, instant meals, bacon, ham and sausages may contain potassium additives. Your body easily absorbs this type of potassium. Talk to your dietitian about choosing less processed foods.

6. Avoid salt substitutes

Avoid LoSalt and Mrs Rogers Low Sodium Salt Mix. Avoid reduced-salt soy sauce which often contains potassium. Choose herbs and spices to flavour food.



To eat less potassium, choose more lower potassium foods and less higher potassium foods

| | LOWER POTASSIUM | HIGHER POTASSIUM |
|---|---|---|
| Snacks and processed foods | Natural corn chips, plain popcorn, rice snacks, unsalted rice cakes and corn thins, crackers, plain biscuits | Potato chips, bhujia mix, flavoured popcorn, instant noodles, instant soup, baked beans, tinned spaghetti, dried fruit, nuts, chocolate or coconut, and biscuits or cakes that contain them |
| Drinks | Water, cordial (e.g. Thirftee, Vitafresh), tea, instant coffee (decaf is lowest in potassium), Milo, Bournvita, and drinking chocolate made with water | Fruit and vegetable juice, coconut water, some sports drinks, smoothies, milky drinks, espresso coffee, flat white, cappuccino, latte, wine, beer |
| Flavouring and spreads | Garlic, ginger, spices, vinegar, herbs, mayonnaise, aioli, mustard, honey, jam, marmalade, hazelnut spread | Salt substitutes (e.g. LoSalt, Mrs Rogers Low Sodium Salt Mix), reduced salt soy sauce containing potassium, tomato puree, marmite, vegemite |
| Protein foods | Choose fresh unprocessed protein foods. It is important to eat the right amount, ask your dietitian how much protein is right for you. Choose a variety of protein foods such as meat, fish, chicken, eggs, chickpeas, beans and legumes. | |
| Dairy and alternatives | Less than 300mL of cows, soy, oat milk or yoghurt. Cheese, cream, rice milk, cashew and almond milks (except barista style). | More than 300mL of cows, soy, oat milk or yoghurt. Condensed milk, evaporated milk, coconut cream, coconut milk. |
| Starchy Foods | Rice, pasta, couscous, noodles, vermicelli. Keep to one fist sized serve of boiled potato, taro, cassava or yam | Green banana, hot chips, kumara. Baked or fried potato, cassava, yam or taro |
| | Bread, cabin bread, chapatti, Chinese steamed bun, Māori bread, pita bread | Bread made with potato flour, dried fruit or coconut |
| | Porridge, Weet-bix, puffed wheat, cornflakes, rice bubbles | Breakfast cereals with dried fruit, bran, nuts or chocolate (e.g. muesli, All Bran, Coco Pops, Sultana Bran) |
| Fruit & Vegetables Choose 2-3 servings of fruit & 5 servings of vegetables per day 1 serve = a small handful or half cup | Apple, pear, nashi, berries, small mandarin, feijoa, persimmon, passionfruit, drained canned fruit, tangerine or tangelo, ½ cup watermelon, cherries, red/green grapes, small plum | Dried fruit, kiwifruit, peach, apricot, nectarine, orange, avocado, pineapple, other melon, banana, rhubarb, grapefruit, mango, tamarillo |
| | Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, lettuce, green beans, mixed vegetables, carrot, capsicum, peas, celery, corn, cucumber, pūhā, bean sprouts, okra, swede, turnip, watercress, asparagus, raw mushrooms, 4 cherry tomatoes | Silverbeet, spinach, courgette, leek, parsnip, pumpkin, taro leaves, tomato, artichoke, brussel sprouts |