

Healthy Eating For Your Kidneys

(For People Not on Dialysis)

BC Provincial Renal Agency

If you have kidney disease, you may need to change the food you eat. Changes will depend on your appetite, your usual foods and your blood work. This booklet will help you make healthy food choices for your kidneys.

Why do I need to follow a special diet?

Eating well can improve your health, make you feel better and protect your kidneys.

What will my diet look like?

You may need to limit:

- Sodium
- Protein

Depending on your blood test results, you may also need to limit:

- Phosphorus
- Potassium

Your dietitian will discuss this with you and help you make any changes.

SODIUM

Do I need to limit sodium?

Sodium is a mineral found in most foods and in all types of salt. With kidney disease your body may not balance sodium and water very well. If you eat too much sodium you may have high blood pressure, thirst, puffy hands, face and feet, and trouble breathing.

How can I eat less sodium?

- Do not add salt to your food.
- Do not add salt in your cooking.
- Use fresh or frozen (without salt) meats, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, vegetables and fruits. These are naturally low in sodium.
- Try making your meals with fresh ingredients.
- Avoid using high sodium packaged or processed foods such as:
 - Ham, bacon, salami and other deli meats
 - Pickles, olives, relish
 - Teriyaki, fish or soy sauces
 - Canned or packaged soups
 - Seasoned packaged or instant rice/noodles
 - Bouillon cubes (OXO[®], Bovril[®]), Marmite[®], Veg-mite[®]
 - Salted snack foods (chips, pretzels, nuts, crackers)
- Read food labels. Ask your dietitian for help.
- Cook with herbs and spices instead of salt.
- Cook at home more often. Restaurant meals are higher in sodium than home cooked meals.

PROTEIN

Do I need to limit protein?

Your body uses protein to build and repair tissues and fight infection. With kidney disease your body may not be able to remove protein waste (urea) from your blood. This may cause taste changes and nausea. You may need to change the amount and type of protein in your diet.

What are protein foods?

- Meat
- Chicken, turkey
- Fish, seafood
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Tofu
- Nuts, peanut butter
- Dried beans, peas and lentils

Your dietitian will advise you on good protein choices and portion sizes.



People with kidney disease should not eat star fruit.

Star fruit contains a toxin that may cause confusion, seizures, hiccups, insomnia and even death.

PHOSPHORUS

What is phosphorus?

Phosphorus is a mineral. It works with calcium to keep your bones and teeth strong.

Why do I need to limit phosphorus?

High blood phosphorus may cause:

- Itchy skin
- Weak and easily broken bones
- Bone pain or painful lumps in your joints
- Hardening of your blood vessels

What foods are high in phosphorus?

Most foods have phosphorus but some foods have more than others.

- **Added sources of phosphorus:** cola beverages, powdered drink mixes, baking mixes, frozen breads, waffles and cookie doughs, non-dairy creamers, processed cheese slices and spreads, processed and marinated meats (may include chicken nuggets, hot dogs, deli meats, frozen chicken breasts, etc.).
- **Naturally occurring phosphorus:** meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, dried beans, peanut butter, nuts and seeds and high fibre grains.

Unlike naturally occurring phosphorus, the phosphorus from additives is almost completely absorbed by your body. You should **limit** foods naturally high in phosphorus and **avoid** foods with phosphorus additives.

Learn to read food labels. Phosphorus additives can be identified by the term “PHOS” as part of the word. Phosphorus additives are **not** listed in the NUTRITION FACTS table. They are only listed in the INGREDIENTS. Food companies can change the ingredients at any time. It is important to read ingredient lists often.

POTASSIUM

What about potassium?

Potassium is a mineral found in most foods. It helps your nerves, muscles and heart work properly. With kidney disease, your body may not be able to remove potassium from your blood. High potassium may cause numbness or tingling in hands and feet, weak muscles or irregular heartbeat.

If your blood potassium level is high, your dietitian will give you a list of high potassium foods and make suggestions for better choices.

FLUID

Making sure you are adequately hydrated is important in maintaining your kidney function. Most people with early kidney problems do not need to limit the fluid they drink. As your kidneys fail, you may notice swelling in your feet and hands. Reducing your sodium intake will help. Your doctor may prescribe medication to reduce these symptoms.

VITAMINS & HERBAL PRODUCTS

Vitamin and mineral supplements are not recommended unless advised by your doctor or dietitian. Herbal remedies may be harmful. Check with your doctor or dietitian prior to taking any herbal products.

