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Low Potassium Information Sheet

What is potassium?

Potassium occurs naturally in most foods. Some potassium is needed as part of a healthy diet.



Why have I been asked to follow a low potassium diet?

High levels of potassium in the blood can affect the beating of the heart, which may lead to serious complications. Eating a low potassium diet helps to reduce your blood potassium.

How can I reduce the amount of potassium that I eat?

This sheet explains which foods are high in potassium and provides suitable alternatives. Your Doctor/ Nurse may also give you individualised advice on the changes you need to make.

Cooking tips

- Avoid cooking vegetables in steamers, pressure cookers, microwaves or stir frying. Vegetables should be boiled in plenty of water. Once cooked the cooking water should be thrown away.
- All potatoes should be boiled and the cooking water thrown away before frying or roasting potatoes
- All pulses should be soaked and then boiled for 10-15 minutes. The cooking water should be thrown away and then the pulses should be re-cooked with seasonings. Tinned pulses are lower in potassium than dried pulses
- If you are vegetarian, avoid having salad and cooked vegetables at the same meal, as it will contain too much potassium. Choose either salad or vegetables

Contact details

If you have any queries about your diet, please contact your renal nurse or renal doctor.

Foods to avoid and those to choose instead

	Foods to limit	Choose these instead
Fruit	Avocadoes, bananas, coconut, mango, oranges, papaya, rhubarb, all dried fruit e.g. currants, prunes, raisins, figs, dates, fruit cake	Two portions of fruit per day (fresh or drained tinned) e.g. apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, <i>but not those listed in the foods to limit list</i>
Vegetables	<p>Baked, steamed or jacket potatoes, chips, oven chips, instant potato, potato waffles or wedges, potato pakoras, fried green banana, plantain, cassava, yam, dasheen, taro</p> <p>Baked beans, beetroot, brussels sprouts, mushrooms, parsnips, spinach, tomatoes, breadfruit, callaloo, karella, drumstick leaves/pods, okra, patra leaves, water chestnuts, tomato puree and tomato based sauces</p>	<p>One small portion per day of well boiled potato, yam, cassava</p> <p>Plus two portions of boiled vegetables per day, <i>but not those listed in the foods to limit list</i></p>
Drinks	<p>Coffee, Horlicks, Ovaltine, Bournvita, cocoa, drinking chocolate, condensed, coconut and evaporated milk, pure fruit juices, fruit and vegetable smoothies</p> <p>Ale, beer, cider lager, stout, wine</p>	<p>Tea, herbal teas, fizzy drinks, squashes, mineral water, 1/3 of a pint of milk per day</p> <p>Spirits e.g. brandy, gin, rum vodka, whiskey (<i>if permitted by your doctor</i>)</p>
Protein	Nuts and seeds	All meat, fish, eggs, quorn, soya mince, pulses
Cereals	Breads and breakfast cereals that contain dried fruits, nuts or chocolate e.g All Bran, sultana Bran, Chocos, Fruit'n'fibre, chocolate croissants, products made from gram flour or besan flour	All types of bread, rice, pasta, couscous, breakfast cereals, noodles, croissants, bagels, crumpets, chapattis, naan, pitta bread, puris, plain paratha
Snacks	<p>Potato and vegetable crisps, nuts and nut products e.g. peanut butter, Bombay mix, chevra, papadums, pakoras</p> <p>Biscuits and cakes containing chocolate, nuts or dried fruit, Chocolate, fudge, marzipan, black treacle, liquorice, toffee.</p> <p>Asian sweets containing milk or nut products e.g. burfi, besan, halva, rasmali</p>	<p>Corn or maize based snacks e.g. skips, wotsits, tortilla chips, rice cakes, crisp breads, breadsticks, crackers, plain popcorn</p> <p>Mints, plain biscuits, plain cake, boiled sweets, marshmallows, jelly babies, Turkish delight, ludoo, jelabi</p>
Miscellaneous	Salt substitutes e.g. Lo Salt, Ruthmol, Selora, vegetable based soups, brown sauce and tomato ketchup, tahini, bovril, marmite	Mustard, mint sauce, horseradish, mayonnaise, salad cream, salad dressing, relish e.g. piccalilli, corn or onion relish, pickle

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