



Kidney Disease: Changing Your Diet

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Overview

When you have chronic kidney disease, you need to change your diet to avoid foods that make your kidneys worse. You may need to limit salt, fluids, and protein. You also may need to limit minerals such as potassium and phosphorus. A diet for chronic kidney disease takes planning. A dietitian who specializes in kidney disease can help you plan meals that meet your needs.

These guidelines are for people who are not on dialysis. Talk with your doctor or dietitian to make sure your diet is right for your condition. Do not change your diet without talking to your doctor or dietitian.

How to eat when you have kidney disease

When you have kidney disease, making changes to your diet can help protect your kidneys. It can also help you control other diseases, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, that can make kidney disease worse.

- There is no one diet that is right for everyone who has kidney disease. Your doctor or dietitian can tailor a diet for you based on how well your kidneys are working.
- It may be hard to change your diet. You may have to give up many foods you like. But it is very important to make the recommended changes so you can stay healthy for as long as possible.
- A dietitian can help you make an eating plan with the right amounts of salt (sodium), potassium, and protein. You may also need to limit how much fluid you drink each day.
- You need to get enough calories to be healthy and have energy. If you have a hard time eating enough, talk to your doctor or dietitian about ways to add calories to your diet.
- Your diet may change over time as your disease changes. See your doctor for regular testing, and work with a dietitian to adjust your diet as needed.

These are general food guidelines for people who have kidney disease. Be sure to follow the diet your doctor or dietitian gave you.

These diet tips are not for you if you are on dialysis or have had a kidney transplant. Follow the special diet your doctor gave you.

- Know how much protein you can have each day. Eating too much protein can stress the kidneys. But if you don't get enough, you can become weak, tired, and more likely to get infections. To get the right amount of protein:
 - Talk to your doctor or dietitian to figure out how much protein you need each day. This will depend on your weight, the health of your kidneys, and if you are on dialysis.

- Learn which foods contain protein. High-protein foods include meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs. Milk and milk products, beans, nuts, breads, pastas, cereals, and vegetables also contain protein.
- Limit sodium.
 - Don't add salt to your food.
 - Read food labels, and look for hidden sodium. Buy foods that are labeled "no salt added," "sodium-free," or "low-sodium." Foods labeled "reduced-sodium" and "light sodium" may still have too much sodium.
 - Avoid salted snacks such as pretzels, chips, and popcorn.
 - Avoid smoked, cured, salted, and canned meat, fish, and poultry. This includes ham, bacon, hot dogs, and luncheon meats.
 - Don't use a salt substitute or lite salt unless your doctor or dietitian says it is okay. Most salt substitutes and lite salts are high in potassium. Use lemon, herbs, and other spices to flavor your meals.
 - Limit how often you eat food from restaurants. Most of the sodium we eat is hidden in processed foods and restaurant food, especially at fast-food and take-out places.
- Limit fluids if your doctor or dietitian recommends it.
If you need to limit fluids:
 - Know how much fluid you can drink. Each day, fill a pitcher with that amount of water. If you drink another fluid during the day, such as coffee, pour an equal amount of water out of the pitcher. When the pitcher is empty, you're done drinking for the day.
 - Remember that soups and foods that are liquid at room temperature count as fluids. These include ice, gelatin, ice pops, and ice cream.
 - Count the liquid in canned fruits and vegetables as part of your daily intake, or drain them well before serving.
- Limit potassium if your doctor or dietitian recommends it.
If you need to limit potassium:
 - Choose low-potassium fruits such as blueberries and raspberries.
 - Choose low-potassium vegetables such as cucumber and radishes.
- Limit phosphorus if your doctor or dietitian recommends it.
If you need to limit phosphorus:
 - Follow your food plan to know how much milk and milk products you can include.
 - Limit nuts, peanut butter, seeds, lentils, beans, organ meats, and sardines. Also limit cured meats such as sausages, bologna, and hot dogs.
 - Avoid colas and soft drinks with phosphate or phosphoric acid.
 - Avoid bran breads and bran cereals.
- Don't skip meals or go for many hours without eating.
If you don't feel very hungry, try to eat 4 or 5 small meals instead of 1 or 2 big meals.
- Talk to your doctor or dietitian if you have trouble keeping your weight up.
Your doctor or dietitian can suggest ways you can add calories to your diet. Healthy fats such as olive or canola oil may be good choices. Unless you have diabetes, you can use honey and sugar to add calories and increase energy.
- Don't take **any** vitamins or minerals, supplements, or herbal products without talking to your doctor first.
- Check with your doctor about whether it is safe for you to drink alcohol.
If you do drink alcohol, have no more than 1 drink a day. Count it as part of your fluids for the day.

Related Information

- Getting Enough Potassium
- Healthy Eating: Eating Less Sodium
- High-Potassium Foods
- How to Find Sodium
- Low-Potassium Foods
- Low-Salt Diets: Eating Out
- Salt Substitute Recipe

Credits

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