



National  
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## **HYPERKALEMIA AND KIDNEY DISEASE: IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW**

### **WHAT IS HYPERKALEMIA?**

- A medical problem in which you have too much potassium in your blood.
- Potassium is an important nutrient. It helps your nerves and muscles, including the heart, work properly. But too much potassium can cause health problems, including serious heart problems.

### **WHY AM I AT RISK?**

- Kidney disease can put you at risk. Healthy kidneys control the amount of potassium in your blood. They balance the amount taken in with the amount lost in urine. If kidneys do not work well, they may not be able to remove extra potassium, which can build up and cause problems. Common causes of kidney disease include diabetes and high blood pressure.
- If you have kidney disease, eating high-potassium foods can put you at risk.
- Uncontrolled diabetes or heart failure can put you at risk.
- Some drugs can put you at risk. Tell your healthcare provider about all the drugs you take, including any blood pressure medicines, over-the-counter products, antibiotics, nutritional supplements, salt substitutes, and herbals.

### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT?**

- Many people will not feel any symptoms. High potassium is often found during routine blood tests. Some people may experience muscle weakness, numbness, tingling, paralysis, nausea, or tiredness. Treatment may include:
  - A low-potassium diet
  - Reducing or changing certain medications, as instructed by your healthcare provider
  - Water pills (diuretics) or potassium binders to help remove extra potassium, if needed
- In some people, hyperkalemia can become life-threatening. It can happen very suddenly and cause a serious heart problem which requires emergency treatment at a hospital or clinic. Call 911 or go to the emergency room if you have:
  - An irregular heartbeat
  - Heart palpitations
  - Shortness of breath
  - Chest pain
  - Nausea
  - Vomiting

## TIPS FOR A LOW-POTASSIUM DIET

Many foods have some potassium. High protein foods such as meat, fish, and chicken also have potassium, but you need a balance of high protein foods to stay healthy. Portion size and how the food is prepared is very important. A dietitian can help you create a meal plan that gives you the right amount of protein to meet your needs. Other tips include:

- **Chinese food:** Choose lower-potassium vegetables such as snow peas, string beans, water chestnuts, bean sprouts, and bok choy.
- **Italian food:** Avoid tomato sauces. Tomatoes are high in potassium.
- **Mexican food:** Can be high in potassium. Avoid beans, guacamole, and salsas made with tomatoes. Choose salsa made with chili peppers instead of tomatoes.
- **Soul food:** Can be high in potassium. Avoid black-eyes peas, dried beans, cooked greens, spinach, yams, and sweet potato pie. Choose chicken (no skin), corn, string beans or okra, wilted lettuce, corn bread, or dinner rolls.
- **At restaurants:** Choose restaurants that make meals from scratch using fresh ingredients. Tell them you are on a special diet. Avoid fast-foods restaurants.

Use this chart to help you choose fruits, vegetables, and other foods that are lower in potassium.

✘ High Potassium Foods	✔ Low Potassium Choices
<b>Fruits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bananas, melons, oranges, nectarines, kiwi, mango, papaya, prunes, pomegranate</li> <li>■ Dates, dried fruits, dried figs</li> </ul>	<b>Fruits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Apple, blueberries, cranberries, grapes, grapefruit, pears, pineapple, raspberries, strawberries</li> </ul>
<b>Vegetables</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Avocados, broccoli, brussel sprouts, sweet potatoes, parsnips, pumpkin, vegetable juices, white potatoes, winter squash</li> <li>■ Tomato and tomato-based products</li> <li>■ Deep-colored and leafy green vegetables (such as spinach or swiss chard)</li> <li>■ Dried beans and peas, black beans, refried beans, baked beans, lentils, legumes</li> </ul>	<b>Vegetables</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Asparagus, cabbage, carrots, celery, corn, cucumber, eggplant</li> <li>■ Green or wax beans, green peas or beans</li> <li>■ Lettuce (iceberg)</li> <li>■ Onions, radishes, turnips, water chestnuts</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Milk, yogurt</li> <li>■ Nuts and seeds</li> <li>■ Bran and bran products</li> <li>■ Chocolate, granola, molasses, peanut butter</li> </ul>	<b>Other</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Rice, noodles, pasta, bread and bread products (not whole grains)</li> <li>■ Angel cake, yellow cake, pies without chocolate or high-potassium fruit, cookies without nuts or chocolate</li> <li>■ Use herbs and spices (and avoid salt substitutes)</li> </ul>



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