



National  
Kidney  
Foundation®

## EDUCATE YOUR PATIENTS ABOUT HYPERKALEMIA AND KIDNEY DISEASE

### EXPLAIN WHAT HYPERKALEMIA IS

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

### EXPLAIN WHY PEOPLE WITH KIDNEY DISEASE ARE AT RISK FOR HYPERKALEMIA

- Healthy kidneys balance the amount of potassium taken in with the amount lost in the urine and stool. If you have kidney disease, your kidneys may not be able to remove enough potassium. Potassium may build up and cause problems. Common causes of kidney disease include diabetes and high blood pressure.
- If you have kidney disease, a diet high in potassium can increase risk for hyperkalemia.
- Uncontrolled diabetes or heart disease can increase risk for hyperkalemia.
- Certain drugs and supplements can increase risk for hyperkalemia. Discuss the following points and answer any questions. Explain why they should not stop taking prescribed medication unless their healthcare provider tells them to:
  - Herbals, nutritional supplements, salt substitutes
  - ACE inhibitors, ARBS, and beta-blockers (blood pressure medications)
  - NSAIDS
  - Tacrolimus and cyclosporine (immunosuppressants)
  - Spironolactone, amiloride, triamterene (potassium-sparing diuretics)
  - Trimethoprim, pentamidine (antibiotics)
  - Heparin (blood thinner)

### EXPLAIN HYPERKALEMIA AND ITS TREATMENT

- Hyperkalemia may develop slowly over weeks to months. It can reoccur and become ongoing.
- Symptoms, if any, are usually mild and nonspecific. They may include fatigue, muscle weakness, numbness, or tingling.
- Treatment may involve:
  - A low-potassium diet.
  - Reducing or changing certain medications, if recommended by the healthcare provider.
  - Medicines that bind potassium in the large intestine, and help remove it from the body (potassium binders). If potassium binders are prescribed, it is very important to follow prescribing instructions carefully.
  - Diuretics (water pills) 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 or heart attack.
  - 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, or vomiting

## EXPLAIN POTASSIUM MANAGEMENT

- Many foods contain potassium. Eat a variety of foods, but in moderation.
- Control potassium by limiting foods that are high in potassium (such as those listed in left-hand column below).
- High protein foods such as meat, fish and chicken also have potassium, but you need a balance of high protein foods to stay healthy. A dietitian can help you create a meal plan that gives you the right amount of protein to meet your needs.
- The table below will 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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