

# DINING OUT WITH CONFIDENCE

*A Guide for Patients  
With Kidney Disease*



National  
Kidney  
Foundation®

[www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)

## National Kidney Foundation's Kidney Disease Outcomes Quality Initiative

Did you know that the National Kidney Foundation's Kidney Disease Outcomes Quality Initiative (NKF-KDOQI™) has guidelines that help your doctor and healthcare team make important decisions about your medical treatment? The information in this booklet is based on the NKF-KDOQI recommended guidelines.

### What is your stage of kidney disease?

There are 5 stages of kidney disease. They are shown in the table below. Your doctor determines your stage of kidney disease based on the presence of kidney damage and your glomerular filtration rate (GFR), which is a measure of your level of kidney function. Your treatment is based on your stage of kidney disease. Speak to your doctor if you have any questions about your stage of kidney disease or your treatment.

#### STAGES OF KIDNEY DISEASE

Stage	Description	Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR)*
1	Kidney damage (e.g., protein in the urine) with normal GFR	90 or above
2	Kidney damage with mild decrease in GFR	60 to 89
3a	Moderate decrease in GFR	45 to 59
3b	Moderate decrease in GFR	30 to 44
4	Severe reduction in GFR	15 to 29
5	Kidney failure	Less than 15

\*Your GFR number tells your doctor how much kidney function you have. As chronic kidney disease progresses, your GFR number decreases.

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## Introduction

Most people enjoy eating out. This guide gives ideas for making your dining experience fun—even with your special diet. Start by learning your diet well and asking your dietitian for any tips or advice. If you have sodium, potassium, phosphorus, or protein restrictions, this booklet will help you make good decisions, based on your specific dietary needs.

### Plan Ahead

If you will be eating out for dinner, plan breakfast and lunch at home accordingly. Cut back on serving sizes and foods high in sodium and potassium during the day. Call ahead to learn more about the menu and how the food is prepared. Explain that you are following a special diet. Many restaurants have websites that list their menus.

Choose a restaurant where it will be easiest to select foods best suited for your diet. Restaurants where food is made to order are the best choice. Restaurant personnel are accustomed to special requests for food items or methods of preparation. However, many require that you call at least 24 hours in advance to make arrangements.

### Making Your Selections

Look over the menu carefully. Ask your server for more details about items you do not know about. Practice making special requests about the way your food is prepared or served. Consider sharing a main dish with a friend or family member.

## Examples of Special Requests

For salad dressings, gravies or sauces: "...on the side." For any grilled, sautéed or baked entrées: "No salt, please." For Asian foods: "...with no MSG (monosodium glutamate)." For sandwiches or burgers: "...without cheese" or "Mustard and catsup on the side."

## Protein Concerns

If your specific diet includes a protein restriction, you may want to request half portions of main dishes that contain meat, poultry, fish, or cheese. You could share a main dish with a dining companion. Another option is to take part of your main dish home in a takeout box.

Don't forget that protein is found in cheese and cream sauces; food prepared with milk, nuts, and eggs; and in vegetarian dishes containing dried beans or lentils.



## Guidelines for Specific Meals or Courses

### Breakfast:

Breakfast can be one of the easiest meals for following your diet when you dine out. Most restaurants offer à la carte breakfast items.

Breakfast	
Good Choices	Poor Choices
Eggs, cooked to order	Cured or salted meats or fish, such as ham, sausage, lox and Canadian bacon. Limit bacon to 2 strips occasionally.
Omelettes with low-potassium vegetables, such as mushrooms or squash	Omelets with cheese or above meats, fast-food breakfast sandwiches, breakfast burritos
Toast, bagels, English muffins, croissants, plain or blueberry muffins	Biscuits and bran muffins
Pancakes, waffles, French toast	Home fries or hash brown potatoes
Margarine, jelly, honey, cinnamon, sugar, and imitation pancake syrup	Real maple syrup or gravy
Low-potassium fruits and juices, such as applesauce or apple juice	Fruits and juices, such as orange juice or a grapefruit half
Hot and cold cereals	Bran cereals and granola with nuts, seeds, or wheat germ
Donuts, fruit pastry, sweet rolls, coffee cake	Pastries containing chocolate, nuts, coconut, or caramel

## TIP

Save your fluid quota throughout the day to allow more when you eat out.

### Beverages:

- Plan the amount of fluid you will have during the meal.
- Plan when you want the beverage: before, during, or after the meal. Decline offers at other times.
- Choose beverages low in potassium and phosphorus. (Ask your dietitian for specific guidelines.)
- Request that your glass or cup not be refilled. Turn cups or glasses upside down before they are filled, or ask to have them removed. Push your glass or cup away from your plate when you are finished to avoid refills. Squeeze lemon wedges into your water to help quench your thirst.
- Order beverages by the glass instead of ordering a pitcher of drinks.



## Beverages

Good Choices	Poor Choices*
Cocktails mixed with club soda, ginger ale, tonic water, or soft drinks (except colas)	Cocktails mixed with fruit juice, tomato juice, vegetable cocktail, milk, cream, or ice cream
Wine, red or white, if potassium is counted (substitute for a fruit)	Beer
Non-cola soft drinks, such as Sprite®, 7UP®, or orange soda	Any cola
Iced tea or coffee	Cocoa, milk, milk shakes, cocoa mixes
Lemonade, limeade, water	Orange juice-type drinks, tomato juice, vegetable juice

\* Avoid beverages with phosphate additives.

### Salads and Salad Bars:

- Salads are often part of the appetizer list. Use your allowed fruits and vegetables for these choices.
- Request that the dressing be served on the side so you can control the amount you eat. Oil and vinegar is always a good choice for dressing. You may bring your own low-sodium dressing. Lemon or lime juice squeezed generously over the salad can replace salad dressing altogether.
- If they are not listed on the menu, ask the waiter which vegetables or fruits are in the salad. Often salads are prepared individually, so you can usually make special requests. Some examples are listed on the following chart.



## Salads

### Good Choices

Lettuce, cabbage, beets, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, jicama, onions, beans, green peas, radishes, sprouts, sweet peppers

Pasta salad, macaroni salad

Beet salad

Coleslaw

Fruit cup or salad, canned fruit cocktail, canned peaches or pears, fresh or canned pineapple, mandarin oranges

Gelatin salads (plain or with low-potassium fruits or vegetables added)

### Poor Choices

Spinach, tomato, avocado, artichoke, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, seeds, nuts

Potato salad

Three-bean salad

Greek salad with olives, relishes, pickles

Salad containing melon, oranges, bananas, kiwi, dried fruit, starfruit

### Appetizers:

- Look for fresh, simple items to avoid a heavy salt or fluid load before your meal.
- A high-protein appetizer can be used as your main course. Portions are usually smaller and less expensive. Some examples are listed on the following chart and will vary with the type of restaurant.

## Appetizers

### Good Choices

Caesar salad with chicken or shrimp

Chicken, pork, or steak tostadas

Crab cakes, steamed clams, fried calamari, most shrimp dishes

Crab Louis salad

Green salad with meat or fish, or chef's salad without ham or cheese (request dressing on the side)

Others: meat balls, chicken wings, pot stickers and dumplings (without dipping sauces), fried zucchini, mushrooms, or onion rings

### Poor Choices

Cottage cheese, cheese fondue, other cheese dishes, anchovies

Quiche, cheese sticks

Oysters

Nachos, potato skins

Chopped liver or pâté; salted or smoked meat, fish or poultry, such as ham, lox or smoked turkey; soup, bouillon, or consommé



## Entrées:

- Portions served in restaurants may be much larger than what you eat at home. When dining out, estimate an amount close to what you normally have. Plan to take the remainder home, or split the meal with another person in your group.

### TIP

Three ounces of cooked meat, fish, or poultry is about the size of a deck of cards. Or, if you weigh meat portions at home, measure them against your hand to use as a guide when eating away from home.

- Grilled items are good choices.
- Request that salt not be added when cooking.
- Request that gravies or sauces be served on the side.
- Avoid mixed dishes or casseroles, which are usually higher in sodium and phosphorus.
- Remove the skin from poultry and any crusts from fried foods to decrease sodium content.
- It is best NOT to add steak sauce, Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, or hot sauce because of the high sodium content.
- Lemon or lime juice and vinegar make good sauces and will bring out a lot of the natural flavor of foods. Black pepper will add zest to the food without making you thirsty.

## Entrées

### Good Choices

Beef (broiled or grilled steaks, burgers without cheese, prime rib roast or hot roast beef sandwiches), chicken (baked, fried, grilled, or roasted), leg of lamb, lamb chops, veal, meatloaf

Fish or seafood (grilled, steamed, or poached)

Seafood or meat kabobs

Fajitas, meat or chicken tacos (no cheese or tomatoes)

Omelets with allowed vegetables and sauce served on the side

Sandwiches (request no cheese): roast beef, chicken, egg, turkey, hot roast beef or turkey, fresh seafood sandwich

### Poor Choices

Mixed dishes, beef or lamb stew, liver and onions, cured or salted meats (ham, corned beef, sausage, prosciutto, chorizo)

Bouillabaisse, oysters, lobster Newburg, lox

Sauces (especially cheese or tomato), gravies

Bean dishes, chili beans, chili con carne

Omelets with bacon, cheese, ham, sausage

Submarine sandwiches, toasted cheese, BLT, bacon hamburger, Reuben, tuna (canned) salad

### Side Dishes:

The more familiar you are with your diet, the easier it will be to choose appropriate foods. It might be wise to review your food lists before going out.

- Choose starches and vegetables that are lower in potassium, such as rice, noodles and green beans.
- If your meal does not include a good choice for your diet, request a substitute.
- Ask that sauces be omitted or served on the side.



### TIP

To increase your food choices at the restaurant, avoid higher-potassium fruits and vegetables during the day before eating out.

### Side Dishes

#### Good Choices

#### Poor Choices

Noodles or pasta, pesto pasta, macaroni salad

Pasta in tomato sauce

Steamed rice, rice pilaf, rice with peas

Yams, sweet potatoes, fried rice, white potatoes

Unsalted breadsticks, bread or rolls

Baked or barbecued beans, refried beans (frijoles)

Lower-potassium vegetables, like asparagus, cabbage, cooked carrots, corn, eggplant, green peas, zucchini, corn on the cob, coleslaw, lettuce salad

Higher-potassium vegetables, like tomatoes, spinach, collard greens, artichokes, acorn squash and others

High-sodium vegetables like sauerkraut, pickled vegetables



### TIP

Remember to take your phosphate binder (also called a phosphorus binder) with your meal. Be sure to carry it with you, and keep some in the car so it is always easily available.

### Desserts:

- Ask for a clear description of the dessert. Choose desserts that have few ingredients to avoid “hidden” phosphorus and potassium.
- Choices with chocolate, cream cheese, ice cream, or nuts will be much higher in potassium and phosphorus. Avoid these, share with a friend, or just eat a small amount.
- Remember, desserts such as fruit ice, gelatin, sorbet, and sherbet, add to your fluid intake for the day.
- Sweets may or may not be desirable for you. Always follow the advice of your dietitian, who is more familiar with your individual needs.

## Desserts

### Good Choices

Angel food, apple, lemon, pound, spice, white or yellow cake may be topped with whipped cream and low-potassium fruit

Sugar cookies, Lorna Doones<sup>®</sup>, vanilla wafers, lemon creme and butter cookies

Fruit ice, sherbet, sorbet

Lower-potassium fruit desserts like berries, strawberry shortcake, gelatin desserts

Pies, tarts or cobblers made with apple, blueberry, cherry, lemon meringue, or strawberry

### Poor Choices

Cakes rich in chocolate, coconut, dried fruit or nuts, such as carrot, chocolate mousse, devil's food, fruit or German chocolate cake

Brownies, chocolate, coconut macaroons, snickerdoodles

Ice cream or frozen yogurt

Fruits higher in potassium, like bananas, oranges, or kiwi

Pies like banana cream, chocolate cream, coconut, minced meat, pecan, pumpkin, sweet potato, or cheese cake

## Specialized or Ethnic Restaurants:

An enjoyable aspect of eating out is trying different ethnic and regional foods. Follow these suggestions for making wise choices.

### Chinese

Caution: May be very high in sodium.

- Request no MSG (monosodium glutamate), soy or fish sauce in food preparation. (The menu may include this information.)
- Avoid restaurants that cook in "bulk"; look for those that prepare foods individually. You may call in advance to get this information.
- Avoid adding soy sauce to the food after it is served. Most Chinese restaurants will provide a hot pepper oil. This can be added to make the food spicier, if desired.

- Soups served with the meal are usually high in sodium and may add undesired fluid weight.
- Choose lower-potassium vegetables, such as snow peas, string beans, water chestnuts, bean sprouts, and bok choy. Request stir-fried vegetables that are not served in heavy sauces.
- Steamed rice is more authentic and has less sodium than fried rice.
- The tea is often served in a pot on the table. Control the amount poured into your cup to help control your fluid weight gain.
- Enjoy your fortune cookie knowing you have made the best choices.

## French

Caution: May be very high in phosphorus.

- French restaurants usually use fresh ingredients, but cream and butter may be added in large amounts.
- Try to avoid those foods prepared in cheese or cream sauces. Careful questioning of the waiter can help you make your decision.
- Choose low-potassium fruits and vegetables, and avoid the high-potassium fried potatoes (*pommes frites*).
- French bread is a good choice, low in sodium, potassium, and phosphorus. The butter served is usually “sweet” or unsalted.
- Select a simple, light vinaigrette for salad dressing.
- Desserts are always a highlight. Look for sorbets (count as fluid), cakes, meringues, or fruits, such as plums, berries or cherries, that are not covered in heavy cream sauces or chocolate.



## **Mexican**

Caution: May be very high in potassium.

- Put aside the chips and salsa that might be at the table when you first sit down. Save the sodium and potassium for your meal.
- Order à la carte, or select entrées that are not served with beans and Spanish rice. Some good items are tacos, tostadas and fajitas.
- Beware of the salsas used. Salsa verde is a green sauce but is made of green tomatoes. Salsas made of chili peppers without tomatoes added are the best choices. Remember, guacamole is made from avocados, which are very high in potassium.
- Tortillas are good bread substitutes. Enjoy them!
- For dessert, try the sopapillas (fried dough) with honey, which are a good choice because they are low in potassium and phosphorus. Pastries are high in saturated fat, however, so make sure to eat them in small portions.

## **Asian Indian**

Caution: May be very high in phosphorus.

- Indian meals are often vegetarian. While it is best to avoid the bean dishes, there are many other delicious foods to choose from.
- Enjoy experimenting with different flavors. Masala, tandoori, and curry preparations are widely available on menus as both chicken and vegetable entrées.
- Remember to ask which vegetables are included in dishes, and make low-potassium choices. Ask your dietitian for a list of low-potassium vegetables and

which vegetables to limit. (See National Kidney Foundation's A to Z Health Guide: *Potassium and Your CKD Diet*.)

- Yogurt is often served as a side dish or as part of side dishes, but remember it is a dairy food and high in phosphorus.
- A large selection of Indian breads, fried, baked, or roasted, are served with most meals or are available as separate orders.
- Most desserts contain milk or milk powder in the recipe, and will be high in phosphorus. Remember to take your phosphate binder.

## **Italian**

Caution: May be very high in potassium.

- Beware of antipasto appetizers that contain salty sausages and pickled or marinated vegetables. These foods could get your meal off to a salty, high-fat start. Also, pass on minestrone soup, which is high in salt and potassium.
- Request an oil and vinegar dressing for salad.
- Italian bread is a good bread choice. Dipping bread in olive oil is a healthy alternative to spreading butter on it. Olive oil contains heart-healthy fats, not the large amount of animal fat in butter.
- Tomato sauces are poor choices, but pastas are served with many sauces that are not tomato based. If you do select one with tomato sauce, request that it be served on the side. Limit cheese and white sauces. You can also have pasta without sauce, or just with olive oil and roasted garlic.

- If you choose pizza, look for a light or vegetarian topping, and request that the tomato sauce and cheese be used lightly. It is best to avoid pepperoni or sausage pizzas, which are high in sodium. Other available toppings may include chicken or fish, both good choices.
- One tablespoon of shredded Parmesan or Romano cheese may be used for flavor. Pepper flakes may be used liberally.
- Italian ices are good dessert choices, but remember to count them as fluid.

## **Japanese**

Caution: May be very high in sodium.

- Avoid the salty soups, like miso, served at the beginning of the meal.
- Request no MSG (monosodium glutamate) and avoid soy sauce.
- Sushi can be a good choice, because portions are small. Avoid raw fish choices, because they may expose you to parasitic infections. Other rolls include cucumbers and cooked shrimp, crab, or eel.
- Try the yakitori, or food grilled on skewers over a charcoal fire. Foods fried in tempura batter are good choices if not dipped in high-sodium sauces.
- Tofu, or soybean curd, is used regularly in Japanese cooking. It is substituted for meat in the kidney diet. Be aware that it is often cooked with soy sauce for added flavor.
- Japanese steak houses offer good choices of grilled meat and vegetables, but portions may be large.

## Soul Food

Caution: May be high in sodium, potassium, and phosphorus.

- Soul food is very challenging to the kidney diet because it is frequently high in sodium, potassium, and phosphorus, as well as fat.
- Salted and cured meats, such as ham, sausages, bacon, and salt pork should be avoided. Bacon and bacon fat are used extensively in the cooking.
- Organ meats, such as chitterlings, are higher in phosphorus than cuts of muscle meat. Limit these to occasional use.
- Dried beans and black-eyed peas are high in phosphorus and potassium. Limit these to small amounts (1–2 tablespoons).
- Cooked greens and spinach are popular. Both are high potassium vegetables. Mustard greens are slightly lower in potassium.
- Yams and sweet potato pie are high in potassium.
- Best meal choices might include fried chicken (with skin removed), corn, string beans or okra, wilted lettuce, corn bread, butter, and banana cake, apple cake or peach cobbler for dessert. Enjoy, and don't forget your phosphate binders.

## Fast Foods:

Eating at fast-food restaurants is not totally out of the question. It does, however, take some thought and planning. While many fast-food items are pre-salted, there may be some items that are prepared without salt. You can also omit the high-sodium condiments, such as BBQ or soy sauce, and limit others, such as catsup, to one package.

Many fast-food restaurants provide nutrition information, so you can check the sodium and potassium content. Your dietitian can also provide this information and tell you the specific amounts of sodium and potassium allowed in your diet.

Fast Foods	
Good Choices	Poor Choices
Regular or junior-size hamburgers	Large, super- or king-size hamburgers or cheeseburgers
Roast beef or turkey sandwiches	Sandwiches with bacon, sauces or cheese
Grilled or broiled chicken sandwiches, tuna or chicken salad	Fried or breaded chicken sandwiches, chicken nuggets or strips
Unsalted onion rings	French fries, Tater Tots®, potato chips, baked potatoes, potato salad, baked beans
Lettuce salads, coleslaw, macaroni salad	High-potassium foods from the salad bar or pickles; limit tomatoes
Non-cola soda, lemonade, tea and coffee, water	Milk shakes and cola sodas

## Where can you get more information?

If you have questions, speak with your healthcare team. They know you and can answer questions about you.

If you want to read more about kidney disease, the National Kidney Foundation has more than 50 other publications that cover many subjects such as:

- Chronic kidney disease (CKD) risk factors, like hypertension and diabetes
- Complications of chronic kidney disease, such as cardiovascular disease, anemia, or bone problems
- Nutrition for CKD patients, with information about carbohydrates, protein, sodium, phosphorus, and potassium
- Treating kidney disease early
- Treating kidney failure with transplantation or dialysis

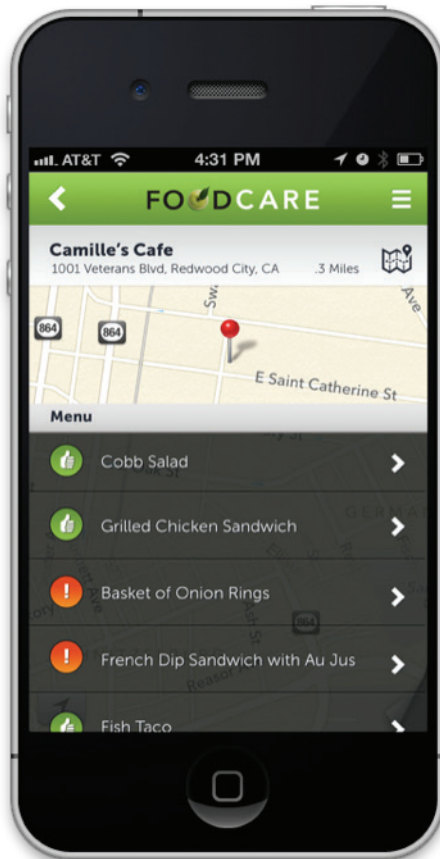
There are two ways to learn about the many free resources available to you:

- Call the NKF Cares Patient Help Line toll free at 855.NKF.CARES (855.653.2273).
- Visit the National Kidney Foundation website (**[www.kidney.org/store](http://www.kidney.org/store)**).

All publications are free, but there is a limit of five per person. Becoming an educated patient is very important to being healthy!

## FoodCare App

Finding a restaurant with CKD-appropriate dishes can be a real challenge. NKF's partner, FoodCare, brings you a smartphone and web-based app that will help you find restaurant dishes that are right for you. Once you create a profile, including your health conditions and food preferences, FoodCare will instantly find healthy, kidney-friendly menu choices at local restaurants, based on current guideline recommendations. Additionally, the FoodCare website brings you thousands of recipes and ingredients to create your own dishes that meet your personal dietary needs. Download your FoodCare App for iPhone, iPad and Android device, and learn more at [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)



**The National Kidney Foundation** is the leading organization in the U.S. dedicated to the awareness, prevention, and treatment of kidney disease for hundreds of thousands of healthcare professionals, millions of patients and their families, and tens of millions of Americans at risk.



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30 East 33rd Street  
New York, NY 10016

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