



KIDNEY-FRIENDLY DIET BY CULTURE: FOOD AND NUTRITION GUIDES

MEXICAN KIDNEY-FRIENDLY DIET FOOD AND NUTRITION GUIDE

Learn how to enjoy traditional Mexican foods while protecting your kidneys.

Mexican Food, Family, and Kidney Health

Mexican food is more than a meal. It is family, culture, and comfort. You do not have to give that up when living with kidney disease. Small changes, like using less salt, choosing smaller portions, and picking lower potassium fruits and vegetables, can help you enjoy the flavors you love while protecting your kidneys.

Staying at a Healthy Weight

Your body needs enough food to stay strong. Eating too little can leave you tired or cause muscle loss. If you are limiting certain foods for kidney health, your kidney dietitian can help you build meals that still give you enough energy.

- Add small amounts of healthy fats like avocado if allowed
- Choose traditional staples in the right portions such as rice or tortillas
- Eat regular meals even when you do not feel hungry

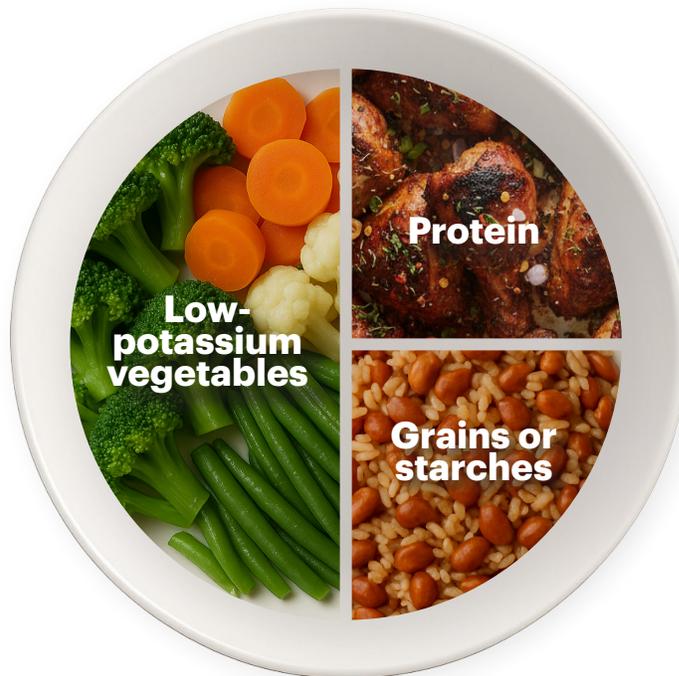
Diabetes and Kidney Disease

Balancing diabetes and kidney disease can be challenging, especially with traditional foods. Try to build meals with vegetables, lean protein, and smaller portions of starches.

For example, grilled fish with cabbage slaw and a small serving of rice can fit both meal plans.

Keep an eye on your blood sugar. Some fruits that are higher in potassium, like mango or plantains, can also raise potassium levels. Your dietitian can help you choose fruits and portions that work for both conditions.

Kidney Plate



Mexican Food Swaps

TRADITIONAL DISH	KIDNEY CONCERN	SWAP	WHY IT HELPS
Carne asada tacos	Large meat portion, sodium	Smaller portion + grilled chicken or fish	Controls protein and sodium
Chiles rellenos	Fried, high fat	Baked poblano stuffed with vegetables	Less fat, lighter option
Refried beans	Potassium, sodium	Rinsed whole beans, smaller portion	Lowers sodium and potassium load
Chorizo	Very high sodium and fat	Lean ground turkey with spices	Reduces sodium and saturated fat
Enchiladas with queso	High phosphorus, sodium	Chicken enchiladas with salsa verde	Lower phosphorus and sodium

How Food Choices Affect Your Kidneys

Some nutrients build up when kidneys do not work well. Watching sodium, potassium, phosphorus, protein, and fluids helps you stay balanced while enjoying Mexican foods.

Key Nutrients to Know

SODIUM

Too much sodium can raise blood pressure and cause fluid buildup. Seasoning packets, bouillon cubes, taco mixes, and processed meats add extra sodium.

Lowering sodium reduces thirst and protects your kidneys.

Goal: Less than 2,300 mg per day
(or 1,500–2,000 mg if advised)

POTASSIUM

Potassium helps muscles and nerves work properly. When kidneys do not remove potassium well, levels can build up and cause heart problems.

Many traditional foods contain potassium, so portion size matters.

Goal: About 2,000 mg per day if limiting

High: avocado, plantains, tomato sauces, potatoes, mango

Lower: cabbage, zucchini, jicama, pineapple, grapes

FLUIDS

Fluids include drinks and foods that are liquid at room temperature, such as soups, gelatin, and ice cream.

Early CKD: Usually drink to thirst

Dialysis: Often 32 to 48 ounces per day, about 4 to 6 cups

PROTEIN

Protein builds muscle and helps fight infection. The amount you need depends on your stage of kidney disease.

Use your palm, about 3 ounces, to estimate portion size.

- Stages 1–3: 0.6–0.8 g/kg per day
- Stage 4: 0.6–0.8 g/kg per day
- Dialysis: 1.0–1.2 g/kg per day

PHOSPHORUS

Phosphorus helps keep bones strong. When kidneys are not working well, phosphorus can build up and weaken bones.

It is found in dairy, processed foods, cola, and packaged snacks.

Goal: About 800–1,000 mg per day if limiting

High: queso, flan, cheese sauces, cola

TIP:

Choose fresh foods and check labels for ingredients that contain “phos.”

TIP:

Celebrations and Festivals

If the menu is set:

- Start with a small portion
- Add vegetables to balance your plate
- Use lime, cilantro, garlic, and spices instead of salt
- Choose water instead of sugary drinks
- Keep high potassium foods in smaller portions

You can celebrate and still protect your kidneys.

For more information, contact the National Kidney Foundation

Toll-free help line: **855.NKF.CARES** or email: nkfcare@kidney.org

The National Kidney Foundation wishes to thank its Council on Renal Nutrition (CRN) for the development of this fact sheet.