

# Nutrition guide to help lower your blood potassium levels

This factsheet is for people with kidney disease who have high blood potassium levels

Potassium is an important mineral naturally found in food. Eating food or drinks is the way you get potassium in the body. When your kidneys do not work properly, they cannot remove enough potassium in your urine. Potassium can build up in your blood and this is called **hyperkalaemia**. Hyperkalaemia can cause your heart and muscles to stop working properly. **What you eat and drink can impact your blood potassium levels.**

You are more likely to have high potassium levels if:

- You are eating too much animal based foods (meat, chicken, dairy, eggs)
- You are frequently eating processed foods that contain potassium additives
- You are constipated
- You have high blood sugar levels (if you have diabetes)

**The following nutrition advice will help to manage your potassium levels, by increasing your fibre intake, controlling your blood sugar levels and reducing how much potassium you eat.**

*This is general advice only. See a dietitian to get personalised advice.*

## 1. YOU SHOULD CHOOSE HIGH FIBRE BREADS AND CEREALS

- Choose fibre-enriched foods such as wholemeal or wholegrain bread, wholemeal pasta, rolled oats and high fibre cereals
- If you have trouble eating enough fibre, you can try fibre supplements like Metamucil or Benefibre



**\*This advice is based on clinical requirements. NSW Health does not endorse one brand over another.**

## 2. YOU CAN REPLACE SOME ANIMAL PROTEINS WITH PLANT PROTEINS

- Plant proteins include tofu, beans, legumes, nuts and seeds. Plant proteins contain more fibre than animal proteins (such as meat or chicken) which keeps your bowels regular.
- Rinse canned beans and legumes well to remove excess potassium
- If choosing dried beans and legumes, pre-boil these in separate water to reduce the potassium content (don't forget to throw away the water they are cooked in)



## 3. YOU SHOULD INCLUDE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES DAILY

- Aim to eat 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables each day
- Avoid all soups, fruit/vegetables juices and dried fruit as these are very high in potassium

1 serve of fruit is



1 medium fruit

OR



2 small fruits

OR



1 cup berries

OR



1 cup drained canned fruit

1 serve of vegetables is  
limit to 1 serve of potato or  
sweet potato per day



½ cup or ½ medium potato

OR



1 cup salad

OR



½ cup fresh or frozen vegetables

OR



½ cup tinned vegetables

## 4. YOU CAN INCLUDE UP TO 2 SERVES OF DAIRY AND MILK PRODUCTS

- It is important to still have some dairy or milk products each day so you can get important nutrients that you need
- Dairy and milk products have higher amounts of potassium, so having more than 2 serves each day can raise your potassium levels too high

1 serve of dairy



1 cup milk or plant based milk



¾ cup yoghurt



2 slices cheese

## 5. SIMPLE FOOD SWAPS TO HELP LOWER YOUR POTASSIUM

There are some foods that contain higher amounts of potassium. You can make some simple food swaps to lower your blood potassium levels.

Higher potassium foods <i>Eat LESS often</i>	Lower potassium foods <i>Eat MORE often</i>
 <p>Fruit and vegetable soup, juice or dried fruit</p>	 <p>Fresh or frozen fruit and boiled vegetables</p>
 <p>High sugar, processed snacks</p>	 <p>High fibre, wholefood snacks</p>
 <p>Potato chips</p>	 <p>Unsalted corn chips, popcorn or nuts</p>
 <p>Salt substitutes (potassium chloride)</p>	 <p>Herbs, spices, citrus, chilli, pepper, garlic</p>
 <p>Roasted or fried potato and sweet potato</p>	 <p>Boiled or mashed potato and sweet potato</p>

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## SUMMARY:

1. Hyperkalaemia (high blood potassium levels) is dangerous as it can stop your heart from working properly
2. There are many other causes of hyperkalaemia which your kidney doctor can help with
3. Some changes you can make to your eating to lower your blood potassium levels are:
  - Choose high fibre breads and cereals
  - Replace some animal proteins with plant proteins
  - Include 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables each day
  - Include up to 2 serves of dairy and milk products each day
  - Swap higher potassium foods for lower potassium foods
4. You should avoid using the internet or social media for nutrition advice as it may be out of date and not tailored to your needs. Always speak to a dietitian for more information.

## DIETITIAN SUGGESTIONS TO HELP LOWER YOUR POTASSIUM:

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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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## WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION:

1. St George Hospital Renal Service: <https://stgrenal.org.au/nutrition-and-dietetics/>
2. Kidney Health Australia: <https://kidney.org.au/>
3. If you aren't already seeing the dietitian, you can ask your doctor to a referral to a dietitian

Patient name:

Date:

Dietitian name:

Dietitian contact details: