What you eat and drink can help slow down the progression of chronic kidney disease (also known as “CKD”) and help prevent complications.

Some foods are better for your kidneys than others. In general, cooking and preparing your food from scratch can help you eat healthier.

The following tips will help you eat right as you manage your CKD.

The First Steps to Eating Right are important for all people with CKD. The Next Steps to Eating Right may become important as your kidneys slow down and function less well.

Work with your doctor or a dietitian to choose the right foods for you.

**The First Steps to Eating Right**

**Step 1: Choose and prepare foods with less salt and sodium.**

*Why do I need to eat less salt?* To help control your blood pressure.

Your diet should contain less than 1,500 milligrams of sodium each day. Here are some tips to reduce salt or sodium in your diet:

- Buy fresh food whenever possible. Sodium (a part of salt) is added to many packaged foods.
- Use spices, herbs, and sodium-free seasonings in place of salt.
- Check the Nutrition Facts label on food packages for sodium. A Daily Value of 20% or more means the food is high in sodium.
- Try lower-sodium versions of frozen dinners and other convenience foods.
- Rinse canned vegetables, beans, meats, and fish with water before eating.

Look for food labels that say:
- Sodium free
- Salt free
- Very low sodium
- Low sodium
- Reduced or less sodium
- Light in sodium
- No salt added
- Unsalted
- Lightly salted

Step 2: Eat the right amount and the right types of protein.

Why should I care about how much protein I eat? To help protect your kidneys and keep you healthy.

Too much protein can be harmful to kidney function, but too little protein may hurt your overall health and nutrition

- Eat smaller portions of protein-rich foods.
- Protein is found in foods from plants and animals. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about how much protein you should eat and to help you choose the right combination of protein foods.
Animal-protein Foods:
- Chicken
- Fish
- Meat
- Eggs
- Dairy

Plant-protein Foods:
- Beans
- Nuts
- Grains

**Step 3: Choose foods that are healthy for your heart.**

*Why do I need to worry about a heart healthy diet?* To help keep fat from building up in your blood vessels and to decrease your chance of having a heart attack or stroke.

CKD patients are at risk for developing heart disease. A healthy diet and lifestyle can help decrease this risk.

- Grill, broil, bake, roast, or stir-fry foods, instead of deep frying.
- Cook with nonstick cooking spray or a small amount of olive oil instead of butter.
- Trim fat from meat and remove skin from poultry before eating.

**Heart-healthy Foods:**
- Lean cuts of meat, like loin or round
- Poultry without the skin
- Fish
Beans
Vegetables
Fruits
Low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese

The Next Steps to Eating Right

As your kidneys slow down, you may need to eat foods that are lower in phosphorus and potassium. Your health care provider will use lab tests to watch your levels.

Step 4: Choose foods with less phosphorus.

Why do I need to pay attention to phosphorous in my diet? To help protect your bones and blood vessels.

- Many packaged foods have added phosphorus. Look for phosphorus—or for words with “PHOS”—on ingredient labels.
- Deli meats and some fresh meat and poultry can have added phosphorus. Ask the butcher to help you pick fresh meats without added phosphorus.

Foods Lower in Phosphorus:
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Breads, pasta, rice
- Rice milk (not enriched)
- Corn and rice cereals
- Light-colored sodas/pop
Foods **Higher** in Phosphorus:
- Meat, poultry, fish
- Bran cereals and oatmeal
- Dairy foods
- Beans, lentils, nuts
- Dark-colored sodas/pop or colas (ie, Coke, Dr. Pepper, Pepsi)

**Step 5: Choose foods that have the right amount of potassium.**

*Why do I care about potassium?* To help your nerves and muscles work the right way.

- Salt substitutes can be very high in potassium. Read the ingredient label and look specifically for potassium on the list. Check with your provider about using salt substitutes.
- Drain canned fruits and vegetables before eating.

Foods **Lower** in Potassium:
- Apples, peaches
- Carrots, green beans
- White bread and pasta
- White rice
- Rice milk (not enriched)
- Cooked rice and wheat cereals, grits
Foods **Higher** in Potassium
- Oranges, bananas
- Potatoes, tomatoes
- Brown and wild rice
- Bran cereals
- Dairy foods
- Whole wheat bread and pasta
- Beans and nuts

*I'm still confused about what to eat to protect my kidneys. Where can I go for help?*

If you have questions about what foods you should be eating or if there are specific foods you should avoid, talk with your doctor or health care provider. You may be able to meet with a nutritionist who can help give you more guidance about the best diet to protect your kidneys and maintain your health.