

Eating Right for Kidney Health: Tips for People with Chronic Kidney Disease

What you eat and drink can help slow down chronic kidney disease. Some foods are better for your kidneys than others. Cooking and preparing your food from scratch can help you eat healthier.

These 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.

Work with your 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? To help control your blood pressure.

In general, people with CKD need to limit their total sodium intake (in food and drinks) to less than 2,000 milligrams of sodium each day. Some people with CKD should not eat more than 1,500 milligrams per day. Ask your doctor what he or she thinks is the right amount of sodium for you.

- Buy fresh food more often. 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? To help protect your kidneys.

- Eat small portions of protein foods.
- Protein is found in foods from plants and animals. Talk to your dietitian about how to choose the right combination for you.

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? To help keep fat from building up in your blood vessels, heart, and kidneys.

- 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? 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
- Colas

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

Why? To help your nerves and muscles work the right way.

- Salt substitutes can be very high in potassium. Read the ingredient label. 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

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Patient Education Handout associated with UMHS Clinical Care Guideline

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