

Reducing your potassium

Information for patients

This leaflet contains some basic information on controlling your potassium intake. You should follow the advice in this leaflet for as long as your doctor or nurse asks you to or until you can speak to a dietitian.

You should check whether you still need to restrict your potassium intake by asking your doctor, nurse or dietitian at every clinic visit.

Introduction

Potassium is a mineral found in many foods. The level of potassium in the blood is normally controlled by the kidneys.

If the kidneys are not functioning properly, then the level of potassium in the blood can increase. A high potassium level or a sudden large increase in the potassium level can be dangerous as it affects the heart muscle.

Certain foods contain a large amount of potassium. By limiting the amount of these foods in your diet you can help to control your blood potassium level. Please see the table under 'How can I control my potassium intake?' on page 2 for advice on what foods to avoid.

Tips to reduce your potassium intake

- ✓ Potassium is water soluble. This means that you should always try to boil your potatoes, yams and other vegetables in plenty of water before eating. This will reduce the amount of potassium that they contain. Make sure you throw the water away. You should avoid microwaving and steaming vegetables. Try to par-boil vegetables, for example, potatoes, sweet potatoes and yam, before cooking further, including frying, roasting or before adding to stews, soups and curries.
- ✓ Tinned fruit and vegetables tend to be lower in potassium than fresh varieties but drain off the water, juice or syrup first and throw it away.

Poor appetite

If your appetite is poor or becomes poor the advice in this leaflet may be hard to follow. It is always very important that you eat enough to keep at a healthy weight and to avoid any unintentional weight loss (losing weight without meaning to).

If you have any concerns about your appetite or whether you are eating enough you should contact your doctor, nurse or dietitian.

How can I control my potassium intake?

Please note that foods in bold print are high in sugar. If you have diabetes and you are currently avoiding these foods, please continue to avoid these foods.

Reduce or limit	Have instead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chocolate, potato or vegetable crisps, Bombay mix, nuts (all kinds including peanuts and coconut) and seeds (for example, chia seeds, sunflower, pumpkin). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boiled sweets, mints, Turkish delight (not chocolate covered). • Plain biscuits, cream or jam filled biscuits or cakes, doughnuts, crumpets, crackers, croissants, non-potato-based crisps (further information can be given).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Espresso, cappuccino and malted or chocolate drinks, including hot chocolate, Horlicks, Ovaltine. • Peanut punch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea, fruit teas. • Maximum of 1 to 2 cups of weak instant or filter coffee daily.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wine, beer, lager. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spirits (within the recommended limit of less than 14 units per week).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried, evaporated, condensed milk. • Milkshakes, including Nutriment, Complian, Meritene etc if you are taking these because of a poor appetite or weight loss, please discuss with your dietitian as there are alternatives. • More than 1/2 pint (280ml) milk per day. This includes fresh (pasteurised) or UHT milk, skimmed, semi-skimmed and full cream milks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 1/2 pint (280ml) fresh (pasteurised) or UHT milk each day (includes milk used in cooking, cereal and desserts).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt substitutes containing potassium, including Lo Salt, Saxa So-Low, reduced or low sodium salts (see 'Warning' below). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a variety of flavourings in your food, for example, pepper, dried herbs, spices, garlic, vinegar.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruit. • Avocado, bananas. • Okra, parsnip, plantain, raw spinach. • Fresh beetroot, tomato puree. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 4 portions of other fruit and vegetables each day. A portion is about 80g (3oz), for example, a small apple, a large tangerine, 2 to 3 tablespoons of cooked vegetables.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more than 1 portion (170g or 6oz) of potato each day. Try to boil before eating or cooking further (see tips). • The same sized serving of boiled breadfruit, yam, sweet potato, cassava or taro can be taken instead of potato. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rice, pasta, noodles, chapattis, couscous, bulgur wheat, cornflour, semolina, oats, bread (including sourdough, brown, white, pitta), cereal (not including nuts or dried fruit).

Warning

Salt substitutes, for example, reduced or low sodium salt, Lo Salt and Saxa So-Low, are made from potassium salts and must not be used. Avoid any manufactured foods containing potassium chloride and look for this on the ingredient list.

Do you need further advice?

If you should require further information about reducing your potassium intake please contact the King's Renal Dietitians on 020 3299 6250 (direct line).

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit www.kch.nhs.uk.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND

Tel: 01689 863252

Email: kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net