

Potassium-Restricted Diet



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Potassium is a mineral that helps your heart beat and your muscles and nerves work. You need just the right amount of potassium. Too much or too little can cause health problems.

Too much potassium in your blood is called hyperkalemia. It can cause chest pain, muscle weakness, irregular heartbeats, and in severe cases, death. If you have high potassium or are at risk, following a potassium-restricted diet can protect your health by keeping your blood potassium levels in a safe range.

A potassium-restricted diet usually means eating 2,000 milligrams (mg) or less per day. Your healthcare provider might tell you to eat even less potassium based on your lab results.

Read food labels

Nutrition Facts Labels

Packaged foods and drinks have Nutrition Facts labels that include details on serving sizes, calories, added sugars, and more. The **potassium** in the food or drink is also listed on the label. **Use this information to help you pick foods and drinks low in potassium.** For example, the label to the right has 175 mg or 5% Daily Value of potassium per 1 cup serving. This food is low in potassium.

| Potassium Level | Amount of Potassium | % Daily Value |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Low | Under 200 mg | Less than 6% |
| High | Over 200 mg | More than 6% |

Serving size is important. Eating more than 1 serving of a low potassium food can make it a high potassium food.

For **raw fruits and vegetables**, food labels are voluntary. Please see the next pages for a list of low and high potassium fruits and vegetables.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| 6 servings per container | |
| Serving size | 1 cup (140g) |
| Amount per serving | |
| Calories | 170 |
| % Daily Value* | |
| Total Fat 8g | 10% |
| Saturated Fat 3g | 15% |
| Trans Fat 0g | |
| Cholesterol 0mg | 0% |
| Sodium 5mg | 0% |
| Total Carbohydrate 22g | 8% |
| Dietary Fiber 2g | 7% |
| Total Sugars 16g | |
| Includes 8g Added Sugars | 16% |
| Protein 2g | |
| Vitamin D 0mcg | 0% |
| Calcium 20mg | 2% |
| Iron 1mg | 6% |
| Potassium 175mg | 5% |

*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Ingredient Labels

Packaged foods and drinks also have ingredient labels, which show all the ingredients used to make the product. The ingredients are listed in order of quantity, from the most to the least.

Watch out for **potassium chloride** on the ingredient label. It is a type of potassium added to foods and is absorbed faster than natural potassium. **Avoid foods with added potassium, like salt substitutes.** Use herbs and spices instead.

Low potassium foods

Eat 4 servings of low potassium fruits and vegetables each day.

Unless noted, **1 serving = ½ cup (4 ounces).**

Measure the food you eat. Add up the total amount of potassium in all meals and snacks to meet your goal of eating 2,000 mg or less of potassium each day (or the amount set by your provider).

Fruits

- Apple (1 medium)
- Applesauce
- Apple juice
- Apricots (canned)
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Boysenberries
- Cherries (12)
- Cranberries
- Fruit cocktail (canned)
- Grapes
- Grape juice
- Grapefruit (1 half)
- Mandarin oranges
- Peaches (canned or 1 small fresh)
- Pears (canned or 1 small fresh)
- Pineapple
- Pineapple juice
- Plums (1 whole)
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Tangerine (1 whole)
- Watermelon (1 cup)

Tip: For canned fruit, look for products canned in water, its own juice, or in light syrup. Drain the liquid from canned fruit to lower the amount of potassium.

Vegetables

- Alfalfa sprouts
- Asparagus (6 spears)
- Broccoli (raw or cooked from frozen)
- Cabbage
- Carrots (cooked)
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Corn (frozen or ½ ear)
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Green beans
- Green peas
- Kale
- Lettuce
- White mushrooms (fresh)
- Onions
- Parsley
- Peppers
- Radishes
- Rhubarb
- Snow peas (cooked)
- Watercress
- Yellow squash
- Zucchini

High potassium foods

Avoid or limit these high potassium foods. Unless noted, **1 serving = ½ cup (4 ounces)**.

Fruits

- Apricots (2 raw or 5 dried)
- Avocado
- Banana
- Cantaloupe
- Dates (5)
- Dried figs
- Grapefruit juice
- Honeydew melon
- Kiwi (1 medium)
- Mango (1 medium)
- Nectarine (1 medium)
- Orange (1 medium)
- Orange juice
- Papaya (½ of a whole)
- Plantain
- Pomegranate (1 whole)
- Pomegranate juice
- Prunes (5)
- Prune juice
- Raisins (¼ cup)
- Tangelo (1 medium)

Vegetables

- Artichokes
- Beans*
- Beets
- Broccoli (cooked)
- Brussels sprouts
- Carrots (raw)
- Carrot juice
- Chickpeas*
- Kohlrabi
- Lentils*
- Mushrooms (boiled and canned)
- Okra
- Parsnips
- Pickles
- Potatoes (non-leached white and sweet)
- Pumpkin
- Spinach (cooked)
- Split peas*
- Swiss chard
- Tomatoes and tomato products, such as paste, sauce (¼ cup), and juice
- V8 vegetable juice
- Winter squash, such as acorn and butternut
- Yams (non-leached)

Tip: Leaching is a cooking method to remove some of the potassium from high potassium vegetables, such as potatoes and other root vegetables. It is still important to limit how much and how often you eat these vegetables if you have high blood potassium. Directions for how to leach vegetables to lower the potassium can be found on the next page.

*For canned legumes (beans, chickpeas, lentils, split peas), drain the liquid and rinse before eating. Talk to a dietitian if you follow a vegetarian or vegan eating pattern.

For dry legumes, soak at room temperature for at least 4 hours or overnight in the refrigerator, then drain the water and rinse before cooking.

Other

- Beef (3 ounces)
- Bran and bran products
- Chocolate (1.5 to 2.0 ounces)
- Coconut water
- Granola
- Electrolyte drink mixes**
- Fish (3 ounces haddock, perch, salmon)
- Ice cream
- Liver
- Milk (all types, 1 cup)
- Molasses (up to 1 tablespoon)
- Nuts and seeds (1 ounce)
- Oral rehydration solutions***
- Peanut butter (2 tablespoons)
- Poultry (3 ounces)
- Tea (up to 16 ounces)
- Tempeh
- Tofu
- Yogurt
- Wheat germ

**Electrolyte drink mixes are intended for hydration purposes only. The amount of potassium in these vary based on the brand.

***Oral rehydration solutions, such as Pedialyte, help replenish fluids and electrolytes lost due to diarrhea, vomiting, extreme heat, or prolonged exercise. These solutions have more potassium and other minerals per serving than other fluids. Please read the product label or packaging carefully.

How to leach vegetables

1. Fill a pot with cold water.
2. Peel the vegetables, then place them in the pot of cold water. (This prevents browning.)
3. Remove the vegetables from the pot, then cut them into 1/8-inch slices.
4. Wash the slices well and rinse.
5. Fill a pot with water and bring to a boil. Add the slices to the pot of boiling water. Cook for at least 10 minutes, then drain the water.
6. Fill the pot again with water and boil the slices until they are soft. Drain the water and rinse the slices before eating.

Leaching potatoes and other root vegetables reduces their potassium by about 50%. However, the food may still have up to 200 mg of potassium in a 1/2 cup serving.

For more information

To learn more, visit the National Kidney Foundation at [kidney.org/kidney-topics/hyperkalemia-high-potassium](https://www.kidney.org/kidney-topics/hyperkalemia-high-potassium).

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, go to wexnermedical.osu.edu/patiented or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or health-info@osu.edu.