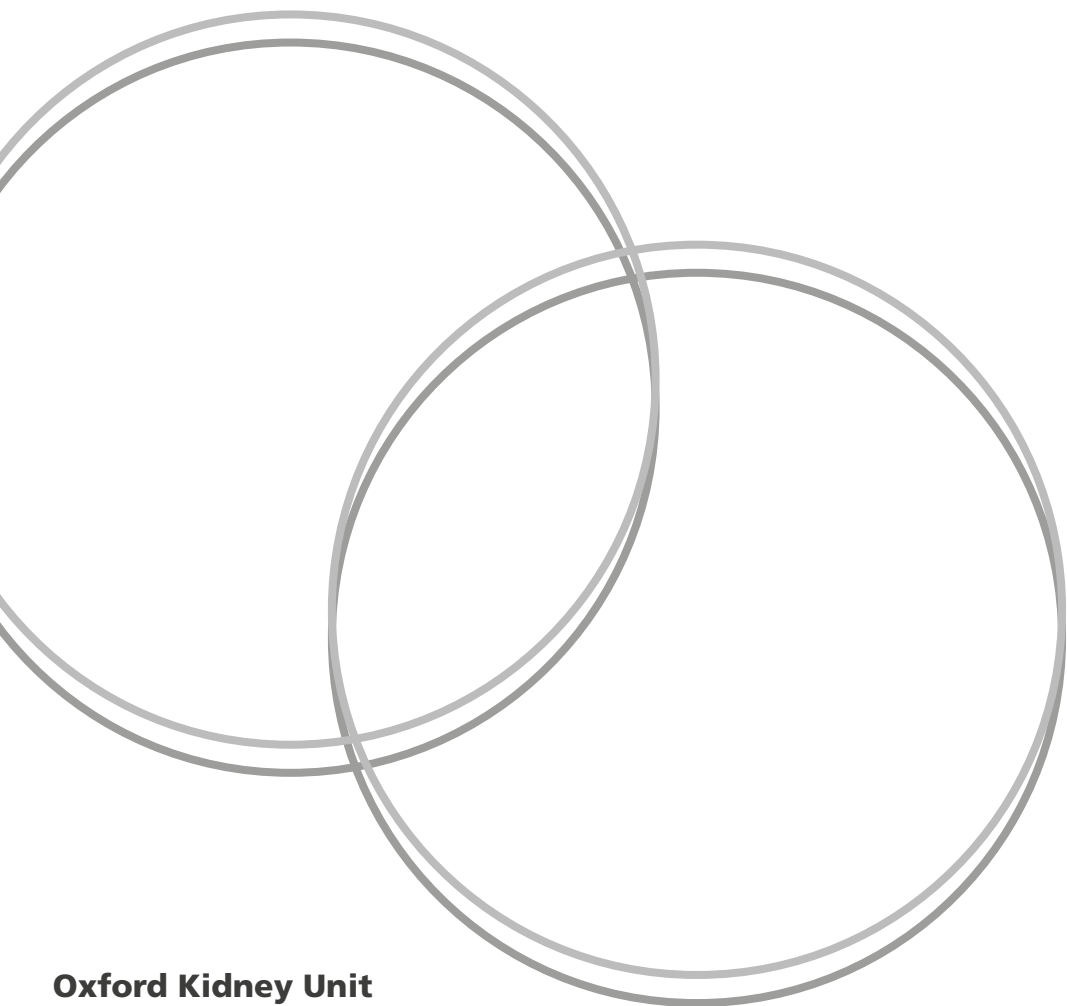




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Potassium: Increasing your dietary intake

**Information for people  
with kidney disease**



**Oxford Kidney Unit**

## **Introduction**

Potassium is a mineral found naturally in many foods. It helps to maintain healthy heart, nerve and muscle function. Low levels of potassium in your blood can cause problems with all of these functions.

If you have been given this information leaflet and you do not have a kidney condition the content is the same and can be followed under the direction of a dietitian.

## **What should my potassium level be?**

Your kidney team will check your potassium level when you have a blood test.

Target potassium levels are: 3.5 to 5.5mmol/l.

## **What can I do if my potassium level is low?**

If the potassium level in your blood is low, it is important to increase the amount of potassium rich foods in your diet. This leaflet will provide you with information on which foods contain higher levels of potassium for you to include in your diet.

## Fruits and vegetables

The table below gives you some examples of high potassium fruits and vegetables to choose from.

As part of the government's healthy eating message, it is advisable to have at least 'Five-a-Day' and aim for at least three of these to be a higher potassium option listed below.

<b>Higher potassium fruit</b>	
Apricot	Orange (large)
Banana	Pomegranate
Blackberries (raw, stewed)	Rhubarb
Blackcurrants	Sharon fruit, persimmon
Cherries	All dried fruit
Coconut	e.g. apricots, currants, dates,
Grapes	figs, raisins, sultanas, mango,
Mango	prunes
Melon (Cantaloupe, Honeydew)	

<b>Higher potassium vegetables</b>	
Artichoke, esp Jerusalem	Okra
Asparagus	Onions, shallots, spring onion
Avocado	Parsnip
Bamboo shoots	Pak Choi
Beetroot	Spinach, Baby spinach
Brussel sprouts	Sweetcorn
Butternut squash	Swiss chard
Celery	Tomatoes: raw, sundried,
Courgette	canned, puree
Fennel	Turnip
Mushrooms	

### **Helpful tips for fruit and vegetables:**

- Roasting, baking, steaming and microwaving are good cooking methods to help retain the potassium content.
- Keeping the skins on also reduces the loss of potassium.
- If you do boil your vegetables and potatoes, consider using the cooking water to make stock for gravy, sauces and soups.
- Vegetables can also be added directly to stews, curries and stir fries.
- Soups containing high potassium vegetables are also a good source of potassium.
- Tinned fruit and vegetables lose a lot of potassium through the canning process. If you are using tinned fruit and vegetables, include the juice, syrup or water they are tinned in when cooking or eating.

## **Starchy carbohydrates**

Higher potassium starchy carbohydrate foods include:

- Potato, sweet potato, cassava and yam. See above for cooking tips.
- Breakfast cereals containing dried fruit and nuts or those high in bran, e.g. muesli, fruit and fibre, granola and All Bran. You can also sprinkle dried fruit, nuts and seeds on your morning porridge or cereal to further increase the potassium content.

## Snacks

Examples of savoury and sweet snacks that are rich in potassium include:

<b>Savoury snacks</b>	
Nuts, nut mixes, nut butters (preferably unsalted) e.g. peanuts, pistachios, walnuts, hazelnuts, pecan, almonds, brazil nuts	Seeds, seed mixes e.g. sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds

<b>Sweet snacks</b>	
Dried fruit e.g. raisins, sultanas, apricots, banana crisps	Dried fruit and nut mix

## Beverages

Some high potassium beverages include:

- coffee
- fresh fruit and vegetable juices
- smoothies
- hi-juice squashes
- milk (also high in phosphate so do not increase if phosphate restriction has been advised)
- coconut water.

If you have been advised on a fluid allowance, make sure that you count everything you drink as part of your daily allowance. If you are unsure if you should follow a fluid allowance, please ask your kidney team.

# Contacts

## Renal Dietitians

Telephone: **01865 225 061**

(8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

Please leave a message on the answerphone and one of the team will call you back.

Please leave a message on the answerphone and one of the dietitians will get back to you.

## **We can only provide advice or information if we care for you under the Oxford Kidney or Transplant Unit (Churchill Hospital).**

This includes the network units at Banbury, High Wycombe, Milton Keynes, Stoke Mandeville, Swindon (Great Western Hospital) and Whitehouse Dialysis Unit. If you do not attend these sites, please contact your local care team for support.

## Clinics

If you are seeing a kidney doctor, the dietitians are available in the Renal Outpatient clinic at the Churchill Hospital each morning. Please speak to the receptionist if you would like to be seen.

## Renal Network Clinics

Some of these clinics are covered by a dietitian. Please ask the receptionist if you would like to be seen.

## **Useful websites**

### **Oxford Kidney Unit**

Lots of information about the Oxford Kidney Unit for patients and carers.

Website: [www.ouh.nhs.uk/oku](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/oku)

### **UK Kidney Association**

Patient information leaflets and advice

Website: [www.ukkidney.org/patients/information-resources/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.ukkidney.org/patients/information-resources/patient-information-leaflets)

### **Kidney Patient Guide**

Information for patients with kidney failure and those who care for them.

Website: [www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk](http://www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk)

### **Kidney Care UK**

A charity which has lots of practical support and information for people with kidney disease.

Website: [www.kidneycareuk.org](http://www.kidneycareuk.org)

### **Six Counties Kidney Patients Association**

The SCKPA is run for patients by patients or family members.

They offer support to people suffering from kidney disease or who are on dialysis. They work closely with the Oxford Kidney Unit and have branches in Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, and Milton Keynes, and parts of Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Berkshire.

Website: [www.sixcountieskpa.org.uk](http://www.sixcountieskpa.org.uk)

### **National Kidney Federation**

A charity which has lots of practical support and information for people with kidney disease.

Website: [www.kidney.org.uk](http://www.kidney.org.uk)

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



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