

Low Phosphorus Diet

Managing phosphorus for chronic kidney disease and dialysis patients.

Phosphorus is a mineral found in most foods and in nearly every processed food. Healthy kidneys remove what the body does not need. In kidney disease, phosphorus accumulates in the blood.

Why This Matters

Excess phosphorus pulls calcium out of your bones, making them weak and prone to fracture. That calcium does not disappear — it deposits in your blood vessels and heart valves, stiffening them. This is a major reason patients with kidney disease develop heart disease. High phosphorus also causes relentless itching and bone pain. Like potassium, it causes no symptoms until real damage is done, which is why we track it on every blood draw.

Choose More Often (Lower Phosphorus)	Limit or Avoid (Higher Phosphorus)
Rice milk (unenriched), almond milk (unenriched)	Milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, cream soups
White bread, white rice, pasta, corn or rice cereal	Whole grain and bran products, oatmeal in large amounts
Fresh chicken, turkey, fish, eggs (portion-controlled)	Processed meats, organ meats, sardines
Fresh fruits and vegetables	Dried beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, peanut butter
Water, lemonade, homemade iced tea	Colas and dark sodas, bottled iced tea, beer, chocolate drinks
Home-cooked meals from fresh ingredients	Fast food, deli meat, frozen dinners, boxed mixes, packaged baked goods

The Rule That Matters Most: Read for "PHOS"

- Phosphorus added during processing is absorbed almost completely — about 90 percent — while phosphorus naturally present in food is absorbed at roughly half that rate.
- Scan the ingredient list for any word containing PHOS: phosphoric acid, sodium phosphate, calcium phosphate, pyrophosphate, polyphosphate.
- Additives are not listed on the nutrition panel — only in the ingredient list. This is where most patients are caught off guard.

Take Your Binders Correctly or They Do Nothing

- Phosphorus binders work only when taken WITH food — the first bite, not before or after the meal.
- If you forget until the meal is over, the dose has missed its window.
- Snacks count. If the snack contains phosphorus, it needs a binder.
- Carry a dose with you for meals away from home.

Hidden Sources Patients Miss

- Dark colas — phosphoric acid, and a single can can undo a careful day.
- "Enhanced," "marinated," or "self-basting" fresh meats and poultry, which are injected with phosphate solutions.
- Non-dairy creamers, bottled iced teas, and many protein bars.

Questions

Every patient is different. The right targets for you depend on your kidney function, your other medical conditions, and your medications. Bring this guide to your next visit and ask us what applies to you. Call **949-642-4974** with questions between visits.