

# Low Potassium Diet

A guide for patients with elevated potassium (hyperkalemia).

Potassium is a mineral that keeps your heart and muscles working normally. Healthy kidneys remove extra potassium in the urine. When kidney function declines, potassium can build up in the blood — a condition called hyperkalemia.

## Why This Matters

High potassium often causes no symptoms at all until it becomes dangerous. At high levels it can disturb the heart's rhythm, which can be life-threatening. Because you cannot feel it rising, we monitor it with blood tests and manage it with diet and medication. Certain blood pressure and heart medications — including ACE inhibitors, ARBs, and spironolactone — raise potassium as well. Do not stop these on your own; they protect your kidneys and heart. Tell us what you are taking and we will adjust the plan around them.

| Choose More Often (Lower Potassium)                                        | Limit or Avoid (Higher Potassium)                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Apples, berries, grapes, pineapple, plums, watermelon                      | Bananas, oranges and orange juice, cantaloupe, honeydew, kiwi, mango             |
| Green beans, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, lettuce, onions, bell peppers | Potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and tomato sauce, winter squash, avocado      |
| White rice, pasta, white bread, corn or rice cereal                        | Bran cereals, granola, whole grain breads in large amounts                       |
| Fresh chicken, turkey, fish, eggs (portion-controlled)                     | Processed and cured meats, organ meats, sardines                                 |
| Rice milk or almond milk (unenriched)                                      | Cow's milk, yogurt, and other dairy in large amounts                             |
| Fresh or dried herbs, garlic, lemon, vinegar                               | Salt substitutes (potassium chloride), beans and lentils, nuts, seeds, chocolate |

### The Single Most Important Rule

- Never use a salt substitute. Products labeled "lite salt," "no salt," or "salt-free" are made of potassium chloride and can raise your potassium to dangerous levels within hours.
- Read labels on protein powders, sports drinks, and coconut water — all are potassium-heavy.

### Leaching: How to Make Potatoes and Vegetables Safer

- Peel and slice thinly, then soak in a large volume of warm water for at least two hours.
- Drain, rinse, and boil in fresh water. Discard the cooking water.
- This removes a meaningful portion of the potassium — it does not eliminate it. Portion size still matters.

### Portion Size Is Half the Battle

- Almost any food becomes high-potassium in a large enough serving.
- One small apple is fine. Three apples is not. Keep fruit servings to about one-half cup.

## 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.