

# YOUR GUIDE TO A LOW-POTASSIUM DIET



**Potassium** is an important nutrient found in many of the foods you eat. It helps your nerves, muscles, and heart work the right way. But too much potassium in your blood can be dangerous and cause serious heart problems.

Talk to a healthcare professional about the risks of high potassium and how a low-potassium diet can help.



Sponsored in part by:



## Why food labels matter

Reading food labels is a great way to see how much potassium is in the food you buy, and help you adjust your eating habits. Ask your doctor how much potassium you should have each day.

**Serving size** tells you what a single portion is.

**Servings per container** lists the number of servings in each container.

**% Daily Value** is based on a 2,000-calorie daily diet. This number helps you know if a food is high or low in a nutrient.

**Potassium** is on food labels, so be sure to look for it.

**Ingredients** Listed in order by weight, with the item that's used the most listed first.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 6 crackers (28g)	
Servings Per Container About 10	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories 120</b> Calories from Fat 40	
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 4.5g	<b>7%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
Polyunsaturated 2.5g	
Monounsaturated Fat 1g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 180mg	<b>8%</b>
<b>Potassium</b> 110mg	<b>3%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 19g	<b>6%</b>
Dietary Fiber 3g	<b>12%</b>
Sugars 0g	
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin A 0% • Vitamin C 0%	
Calcium 0% • Iron 4%	
Phosphorous 10%	

**INGREDIENTS:** WHOLE WHEAT, SOYBEAN AND/OR PALM OIL, SALT. **CONTAINS: WHEAT.**

### Know your potassium percentages:

**Low:** 3% = 100 mg or less

**Medium:** 3%–6% = 101–200 mg

**High:** 6%–9% = 201–300 mg

**Very High:** 9% = 300 mg or more

## High or low is good to know

Even “good” foods like fruit and vegetables can be high in potassium. Use the lists below to find which foods are high in potassium and which are low.



### ✘ High-potassium foods

Limit or avoid these foods in your diet.

#### Fruits



- Bananas, melons, oranges, nectarines, kiwi, mango, papaya, prunes, pomegranate
- Dates, dried fruits, dried figs

#### Vegetables



- Avocados, broccoli, brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, parsnips, pumpkin, vegetable juices, white potatoes, winter squash
- Tomato and tomato-based products
- Deep-colored and leafy green vegetables (such as spinach or swiss chard)
- Dried beans and peas, black beans, refried beans, baked beans, lentils, legumes

#### Other



- Milk, yogurt
- Nuts and seeds
- Bran and bran products
- Chocolate, granola, molasses, peanut butter

### ✔ Lower-potassium foods

Include these in your diet in moderation.

#### Fruits



- Apples, blueberries, cranberries, grapes, grapefruit, peaches, pears, pineapple, raspberries

#### Vegetables



- Asparagus
- Beans (green or wax)
- Cabbage and lettuce (iceberg)
- Carrots, celery
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Onions, radishes, turnips

#### Other



- Rice, noodles, pasta, bread and bread products (not whole grains)
- Angel cake, yellow cake, pies without chocolate or high-potassium fruit, cookies without nuts or chocolate

## Guidelines for serving sizes

Dietitians who specialize in kidney disease can tell you how many servings of each food you should have at each meal. The list below can help, too.



### Food groups

### Serving sizes

#### Protein

Meats, poultry, fish 1 oz cooked  
*Note: 3 oz = about the size of your palm*

#### Dairy

Milk or milk substitute 4 oz or ½ cup  
 Egg 1 egg  
 Cheese 1 oz

#### Grains

Cooked pasta, rice ⅓ cup  
 Cereal, cooked ½ cup  
 Cereal, ready to eat 1 cup  
 Bread 1 slice  
 Hamburger bun ½ bun

#### Vegetables

Cooked ½ cup  
 Raw 1 med or 1 cup cut

#### Fruits

Fresh fruit 1 small or ½ large  
 Canned or frozen fruit ½ cup  
 Juices 4 oz or ½ cup  
 Berries 1 cup  
 Grapes, cherries 12 grapes or cherries

### Food groups

### Serving sizes

#### Fats and oils

Oils, margarine 1 teaspoon  
 Mayonnaise 1 tablespoon  
 Salad dressing 2 tablespoons

#### Sweets

Cookie 1 cookie  
 Ice cream, sorbet, gelatin ½ cup  
 Cake, 2 x 2 inches 1 piece  
 Fruit pie ⅓ of 8-inch pie  
 Sugar, jelly, jam 1 tablespoon

#### Nuts, seeds, and legumes

Nuts ¼ cup or 1 oz  
 Seeds 2 tablespoons  
 Legumes, beans, peas, cooked ½ cup  
 Peanut butter 2 tablespoons

## Want to learn more about eating a low-potassium diet?



Visit the **National Kidney Foundation** at [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org).

## Choose meals with less potassium

Limiting how much potassium you eat doesn't mean you can't enjoy a home-cooked meal or dine out—but it's important to know how to shop, plan, and prepare meals with less potassium.

**Remember:** Serving size is important, as almost all foods have some amount of potassium. A large serving of a low-potassium food can turn into a high-potassium food.

### At home

- **Don't** drink or use liquid from canned fruits, vegetables, or cooked meat
- **Eat a variety** of foods, but in moderation



### At restaurants

- **Choose restaurants** best suited to your diet or where food is made to order
- **Ask about the menu** and how their food is prepared—many restaurants have websites with menus posted
- **To have more choices when eating out**, avoid higher potassium fruits and vegetables during the day beforehand
- **Choose starches and vegetables** that are lower in potassium (such as rice, noodles, and green beans)
- **Avoid French fries** and other fried potatoes
- **Avoid desserts with:** chocolate, ice cream, or nuts—they're high in potassium



### Ethnic foods

#### Chinese food

- **Choose lower-potassium vegetables** such as snow peas, string beans, water chestnuts, bean sprouts, or bok choy

#### Mexican food

- **Be cautious**—Mexican food may be high in potassium
- **Beware of salsa**—salsa verde is a green sauce but is made of green tomatoes. A better choice? Choose salsa made of chili peppers without tomatoes added
- **Avoid beans and guacamole**—both are high in potassium

#### Italian food

- **Avoid tomato sauces.** Tomatoes are high in potassium, but pasta is served with many sauces that are not tomato-based
- **If you must select a meal with tomato sauce**, ask that it be served on the side

#### Soul food

- **Be careful**—soul food is often high in potassium
- **Avoid these:** black-eyed peas, dried beans, cooked greens, spinach, yams, and sweet potato pie—all are high in potassium
- **Try these instead:** fried chicken (no skin), corn, string beans or okra, wilted lettuce, corn bread