

Short term potassium lowering diet

Dietetics

Patient information

What is this leaflet about?

This leaflet is for people who are in hospital and have been asked to follow a short-term potassium lowering diet by their dietitian, doctor or nurse.

Why have I been given this information?

You have been given this leaflet because blood tests have shown that you have a level of potassium in your blood which could be harmful to you.

Following the advice in this leaflet for the time that you are in hospital can help to prevent you from becoming unwell because you have too much potassium in your blood.

What is potassium?

Potassium is a mineral which can build up in your blood when your kidneys cannot get rid of it in your urine (when you pee).

This can happen:

- If you become unwell and your kidneys are not working properly.
- If you are taking a medication that has the side effect of increasing the potassium in your blood.

Your body needs some potassium to work as it should.

For example, potassium helps to keep your nerves and muscles working properly.

What can happen if the levels of potassium in my blood get too high?

Having high levels of potassium in your blood is called 'hyperkaleamia'.

Hyperkaleamia can affect the way your heart works so that it does not beat in the way that it should (you have an abnormal heart rhythm). This can be very dangerous and even life-threatening if it is not treated.

How does changing my diet help?

Many of the foods and drinks that we have every day contain potassium.

You can help to avoid your potassium going too high by:

- Reducing the amount of high potassium food and drinks in your diet.
- Switching to lower potassium food and drink options.

Your medical team may also change your medications; suggest other treatments alongside changes to your diet; or both.

How long do I need to follow this advice for?

You only need to follow this advice in the short term, while you are in a hospital ward and only if you have high potassium levels.

When you are ready to go home from hospital (be discharged), we will talk with you again about your low potassium diet and whether it would best for you to stay on it.

If your potassium levels remain high and you need to follow this diet at home a dietitian will give you dietary advice which is right for you.

How do I follow this diet while in hospital?

All the main meal dishes on the hospital menu are suitable choices for you as they are not high in potassium. This includes the salad and sandwich options.

You may need to consider which side-dishes drinks and snacks you choose. Some of these may be higher in potassium. Use the table below to check which options will be better for you and ask if you are not sure.

You can also use the table to help you to decide what foods friends and family could bring in for you that are lower in potassium.

Types of food	Lower potassium choices	Higher potassium foods to reduce
Cold drinks	Squash, fizzy drinks, flavoured water.	Pure fruit juice, glasses of milk, smoothies, coconut water, milkshakes. Be aware , you can have milk-based drinks if your dietitian or doctor has advised you to.
Hot drinks	Tea, herbal tea.	Coffee (one cup a day), hot chocolate, malted drinks, Bovril.
Soup	Cream of chicken, minestrone, oxtail.	Tomato, mushroom, cup a soup. Be aware , you can have these soups, build up soups or both if your dietitian or doctor has advised you to.

Types of food	Lower potassium choices	Higher potassium foods to reduce
Starchy foods	Mashed potatoes, boiled potatoes, rice, pasta, bread, crackers, roast potatoes. Breakfast cereals such as Ready Brek, porridge, cornflakes, Weetabix and rice crispies.	Jacket potatoes, chips, potato wedges, hash browns, croquettes. Cereals containing dried fruit, nuts or both. For example, granola or muesli.
Condiments	Pepper, vinegar, mayonnaise, salad cream, mustard, mint sauce, apple sauce. Jam, marmalade, honey, lemon curd.	Ketchup or brown sauce (limit to 1 sachet per meal), Marmite. Lower sodium salt brands. Be aware , try to avoid normal salt too, or use it as little as possible. Chocolate spread, nut butter.
Vegetables	Carrots, peas, sweetcorn, mixed veg, swede, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, cabbage, mashed root vegetables, side salad, Salads (all hospital menu salad options are suitable).	
Fruit	Apples, pears, satsumas, peach, blueberries, tinned fruit, small handful of grapes or strawberries, small slice of melon.	Tropical fruit including bananas, coconut, mango, and pineapple. Rhubarb. Dried fruit including raisins, sultanas, prunes, apricots and dates.

Types of food	Lower potassium choices	Higher potassium foods to reduce
Puddings	Sponge, crumble, milk puddings, yogurt, crème caramel, mousse, jelly, ice cream, trifle, tinned fruit or fruit in juice, stewed fruit, custard, rice pudding, sticky toffee pudding. All hospital menu puddings are suitable choices.	Chocolate puddings.
Biscuits	Rich tea, digestives, shortbread, oat biscuits, malted milk, custard creams, ginger snaps, bourbons.	Biscuits rich in solid chocolate, nuts, coconut, or dried fruit.
Cakes	Plain sponge, Swiss roll, doughnuts, jam tart, ginger cake, carrot cake, angel cake, madeira, jelly.	Chocolate cake, rich fruit cake.
Sweet snacks	Boiled sweets, mints, marshmallows, toffees, jelly sweets, Turkish delight, plain flapjack.	Solid chocolate, fudge, liquorice, fruit and nuts mix.
Savoury Snacks	Cheese and crackers, Bread roll and butter. Corn, rice or wheat-based snacks. These include rice cakes, oat cakes, popcorn, tortilla chips and bread sticks. Sandwiches (all hospital menu options are suitable choices).	Potato crisps, nuts, Bombay mix.

Be aware

Some of these items are high in sugar.

You may be asked to:

- limit the amount of these that you have
- choose food and drinks which are lower in sugar instead.

If you have been diagnosed as having diabetes, your dietitian or doctor will be able to give you further advice about which foods and drinks are right for you.

Who can I contact if I need further advice, support or information after I have read this information?

Please contact your Dietitians Department:

Princess Royal Hospital

Lewes Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 4EX

01444 441881 Ext. 68313

Royal Sussex County Hospital

Eastern Road, Brighton, BN2 5BE

01273 696955 Ext. 64290

St Richard's Hospital

Spitalfield Lane, Chichester, West Sussex, PO196SE

01243 788122 Ext. 35201

Worthing Hospital

Lyndhurst Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 2ND

01903 205111 Ext. 86255

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