



Following a low potassium diet: a guide for families

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1. Why do I need to lower my baby's potassium intake?

Potassium is a very important mineral that occurs naturally in the body. We get the potassium our body needs from the food we eat. Our kidneys maintain the right balance of potassium by keeping in the potassium that we need for good health and getting rid of excess potassium in the urine. As your child's kidney function is impaired, the potassium levels in their blood will build up. This may cause muscles, such as the heart, and the nervous system to not work properly.

2. Steps to introduce solid foods

Step 1

Gradually replace some of your breastmilk or infant formula with a mixed diet

- As your baby begins to eat solid foods, they will drink less breastmilk or infant formula.
- To start you can give small amounts of normal weaning foods such as vegetables, fruits and cereals.
- When your baby's appetite for solid foods increases and they start to take larger amounts their serum potassium levels need to be re-checked.

Step 2

Depending on serum potassium levels, which foods can I give next?

If your baby's potassium level is high



Replace some of your breastmilk or infant formula with a renal-specific low potassium formula or adapt your normal infant formula.



Mainly choose fruits and vegetables with a low or moderate potassium content (see the tables on pages 9 and 10).

Your dietitian will help you with any changes you may need to make with your child's diet

Guidelines advise to introduce solid foods around 6 months of age. If you think your baby is ready for solids before 6 months, discuss this with your dietitian.

Depending on your baby's ability, foods can be either be a pureed texture, minced texture or be cut into little soft pieces.

Foods which may be offered:

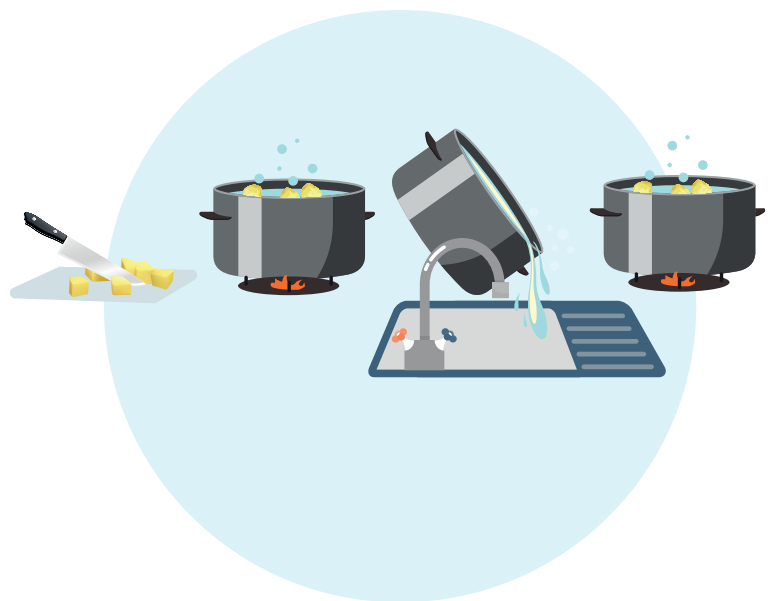
- pasta, couscous or rice with vegetables with a low or moderate potassium content (see page 10)
- fresh unprocessed meat, fish, chicken; pulses, ground nuts or smooth nut butters
- add some oil or vegetable spread to provide extra calories
- fruits with low or moderate potassium content (see page 9)

Baby jars containing vegetables or fruits with a low or moderate potassium content are a suitable alternative.

If your baby's potassium level is high

Adjust your cooking methods to reduce the amount of potassium in foods.

- Before cooking potatoes, remove the skin and cut them into small pieces.
- Then boil the potatoes in a large amount of water. This helps the potato lose some of its potassium.
- Pour the water away.
- Now boil the potatoes in fresh water and again pour away the water once the potatoes are cooked. This lowers the potassium content even further.
- Don't use the water for making gravies or sauces – always pour the water away.



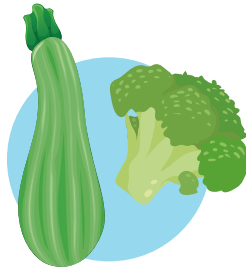
Try to avoid frying, stir frying, cooking in a tajine, steaming, using a pressure cooker and boiling potatoes with the skin on. These methods don't reduce the potassium content.

Cooking food in a microwave oven only reduces the potassium content by a small amount. Food may be reheated in a microwave, but stir well after heating to avoid 'hot spots' which may burn your baby's mouth.

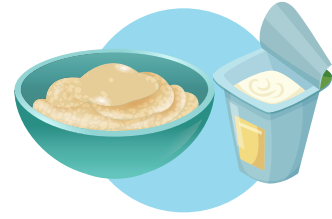
If your baby's potassium level is ok



If you have started with vegetables, then move on to include some fruits

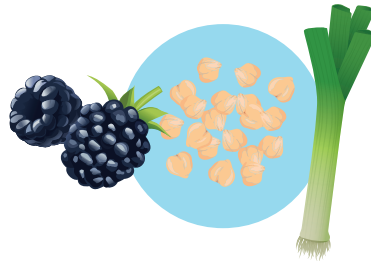


If you have started with fruits then now it is time to introduce some vegetables



Increase the amount of moderate potassium foods (see the tables on pages 9-11)

If your baby's potassium level is still ok



Introduce higher potassium foods (see the tables on pages 9-11)

Step 3

Limit high potassium foods and drinks

As your baby gets older their diet will become more varied.

Many foods contain potassium. To make sure that your baby has a balanced diet which contains enough fiber, vitamins and minerals, it is important to look at the foods that you may now wish to give. Preferably give foods with a high nutritional value.

High nutritional value foods and drinks

Breastmilk
 Infant formula
 Vegetables
 Fruit
 Potatoes
 Meat
 Fish
 Nut butters
 Pulses

Low nutritional value foods and drinks

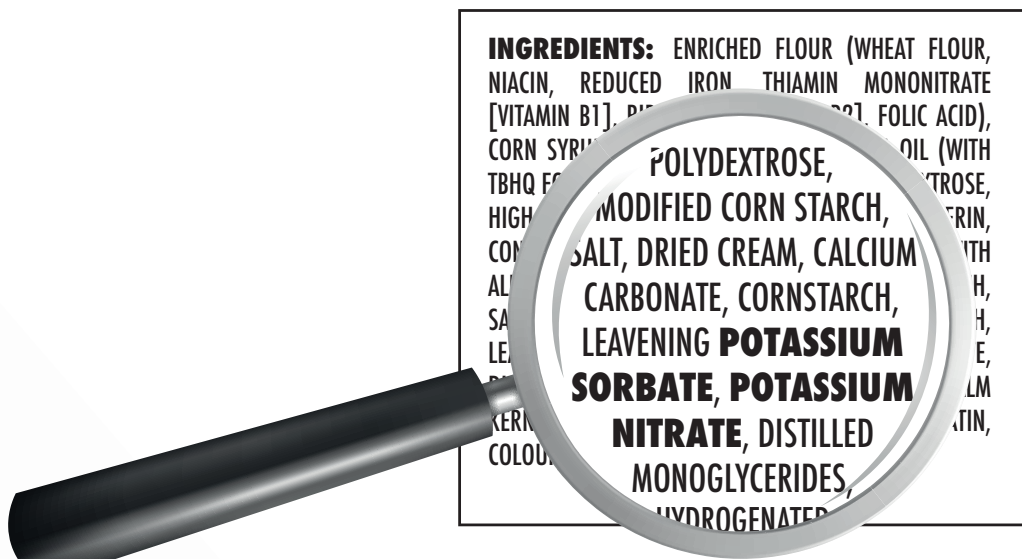
Fruit juices



It is important to choose fresh foods rather than processed foods.

Potassium additives may be added to processed foods for a number of reasons, e.g. as a preservative, sweetener, emulsifier, stabilizer, thickener or gelling agent. They can more than double the potassium content of a food.

Look for “potassium” as a part of an ingredient name in the ingredients list of processed foods. This indicates the presence of potassium additives that should be avoided. Manufacturers may also list the E-numbers of potassium containing additives.



Manufacturers are not required in all countries to list potassium on the ingredients/nutrients lists.

In general ready to eat, processed and 'fast food' contains more potassium than fresh food.

Salt substitutes are often high in potassium. If anyone in your family uses a salt substitute, you must make sure it is not given to your baby.

3. Medications

Some medications contain potassium.

Your medical team will look at your baby's current medications and will make adjustments, if necessary.



Notes



My dietitian is:

Telephone:

Email:

4. Food tables

The following tables show foods with a high (red), moderate (orange) or low (green) potassium content. Your dietitian will let you know how many servings of each of the foods in the red, orange or green categories your baby can have each day. Remember to puree, mince or chop food into little soft pieces, depending on your baby's ability to eat solid foods.

..... red foods orange foods green foods

Potassium content of fruit	
■ High potassium	■ Moderate potassium
	■ Lower potassium
Fruits	
Apple	Mango
Apricot, semi-dried	Melon, honeydew
Apricot	Nectarine
Avocado	Orange
Banana	Passion fruit
Blackberries	Peach
Blueberries	Pear
Cherries	Pineapple
Clementine	Pineapple, canned in juice/syrup
Dates, dried	Plum
Fig, semi-dried	Prunes, semi-dried
Fruit cocktail, canned in juice/syrup	Raisins/sultanas, dried
Grapefruit	Raspberries
Grapes	Satsuma
Kiwi fruit	Strawberries
Lychees, raw	Tangerine
Mandarin	Watermelon
Mandarins, canned in syrup	

Potassium content of vegetables and pulses

■ High potassium

■ Moderate potassium

■ Lower potassium

Vegetables and pulses (legumes)	
Asparagus, steamed	Mushrooms, fried in oil
Aubergine, fried in oil, including skin	Okra, boiled
Baked beans, canned in tomato sauce	Onion, fried in oil
Beansprouts	Onion, raw
Beetroot, boiled	Parsnip, boiled
Black eye beans, dried, boiled	Peas, boiled
Broad beans, boiled	Peppers, green, raw, sliced
Broccoli, boiled	Peppers, red, yellow, raw, sliced
Brussels sprouts, boiled	Plantain, boiled
Butter beans, dried, boiled	Pumpkin, boiled
Butternut squash, baked	Radishes
Cabbage, green, boiled	Red kidney beans, canned, reheated
Cannellini beans, canned, reheated	Runner beans, boiled
Carrot, boiled	Spinach, boiled
Cauliflower, boiled	Swede, boiled
Celery	Sweetcorn, kernels canned in water, drained
Chickpeas, dried, boiled	Sweet potato, boiled
Courgette, boiled	Tomato
Cucumber	Tomato, cherry
Houmous	Tomato, canned
Leek, boiled	Turnip, boiled
Lentils, red, split, dried, boiled	Turnip tops, boiled
Lettuce, average	Watercress
	Yam, boiled

High potassium foods with alternative lower potassium foods

■ High potassium

■ Moderate potassium

■ Lower potassium

Cereal (grain) and cereal products	Milk and dairy products
Couscous, raw	Fromage frais, fruit flavor
Noodles, egg, fine, boiled	Ice cream, vanilla, soft scoop
Pasta, white, dried, boiled	Cow's milk, whole
Polenta, raw	Custard, canned
Rice, white boiled	Yogurt, whole milk, fruit
Rice, brown, boiled	Potatoes
Risotto, plain	Potatoes, new, boiled, with skin
Semolina, raw	Potatoes, old, baked in jacket, flesh only, no skin
Tapioca, raw	Potatoes, chips, cut fine, fast food
Bread, white	Potatoes, old, mashed with butter
Bread, brown	Potatoes, old, roast
Bread, whole meal	Nuts (whole nuts should not be given to children under 5 years of age)
Breakfast cereal, cornflakes, fortified	Almonds
Breakfast cereal, porridge made with water, fortified	Brazil nuts
Breakfast cereal, porridge made with whole milk, fortified	Cashews
Breakfast cereal, puffed wheat, honey coated, fortified	Hazel nuts
Breakfast cereal, wheat biscuits, fortified	Peanuts
Cake, sponge, jam and butter cream	Peanut butter, smooth
Cake, sponge, chocolate fudge	Walnuts
Cake, sponge, fruit, plain	Meat, chicken or fish
Cookie (biscuit), digestive, half coated with chocolate	Burger, beef, homemade, grilled, average
Cookie (biscuit), semi-sweet	Chicken/lamb/beef/pork, roasted, meat only
Cookie (biscuit), short, sweet	Cod, steamed/microwaved, flesh only
Cream crackers	Salmon, baked/grilled, flesh only
Crispbread	



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