PAEDIATRIC RENAL NUTRITION TASKFORCE

Following a low potassium diet: a guide for families

Contents

Why do I need to lower my child'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 their muscles, such as the heart, and the nervous system to not work properly.

Steps to lower potassium intake

Step 1

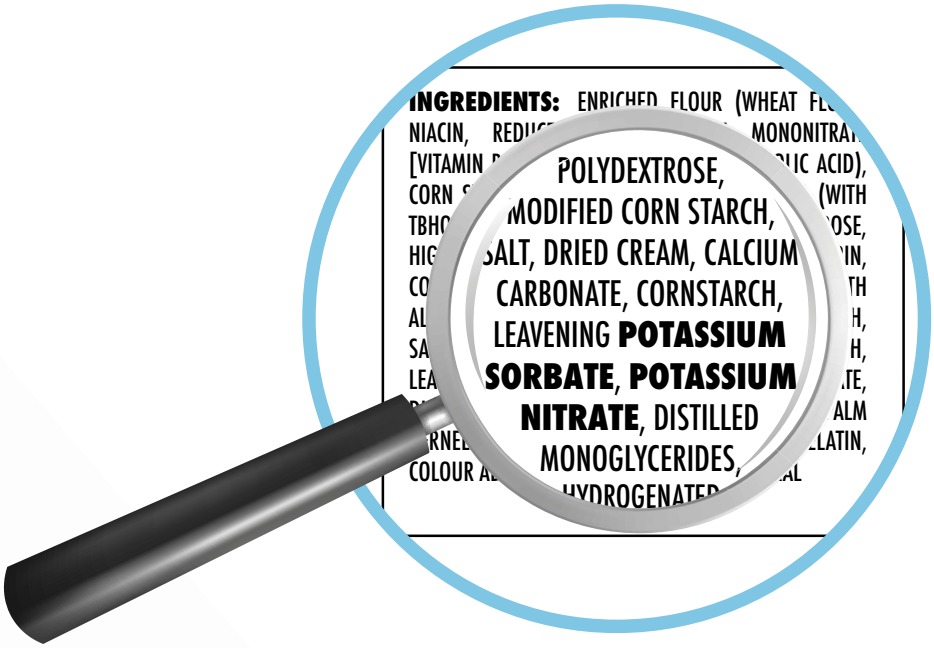
Read packaging labels - avoid potassium additives

It is important to choose fresh foods rather than processed foods. Potassium additives may be added to processed foods 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. 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 child.

Takeaway foods can contain high amounts of potassium. Limit these where possible - cooking from fresh is always a better option. Discuss lower potassium alternatives with your dietitian.



Potassium additives

E202	Potassium sorbate
E212	Potassium benzoate
E224	Potassium metabisulphite
E228	Potassium hydrogen sulphite
E249	Potassium nitrite
E252	Potassium nitrate
E283	Potassium propionate
E261	Potassium acetate
E326	Potassium lactate
E332	Potassium citrate
E336	Potassium tartrates
E337	Sodium potassium tartrate
E340	Potassium phosphates
E357	Potassium adipate
E402	Potassium alginate
E450	Potassium polyphosphate
E470a	Fatty acid salts
E501	Potassium carbonates
E508	Potassium chloride
E515	Potassium sulphates
E522	Aluminium potassium sulphate
E525	Potassium hydroxide
E536	Potassium ferrocyanide
E555	Potassium aluminium silicate
E577	Potassium gluconate
E622	Monopotassiumglutamate
E628	Dipotassium guanylate
E632	Dipotassium inosinate
E950	Acesulfame K
E954	Saccharin

Step 2

Limit the intake of high potassium foods and drinks with low nutritional value

Many foods contain potassium. To make sure that your child has a balanced diet which contains enough fiber, vitamins and minerals, it is important to look at the foods they are eating.

High nutritional value foods and drinks

These foods and drinks are naturally high in potassium but have a high nutritional value - your dietitian will advise you on the amount you can give and the type to choose

- **Milk and milk products**
- **Potatoes and other starchy roots and tubers**
- **Vegetables**
- **Pulses**
- **Cereals (grains) and cereal products**
- **Fruit and fruit products**
- **Dried fruit**
- **Meat**
- **Nuts***
- **Fresh homemade vegetable soup**

Low nutritional value foods and drinks

These low nutritional value foods and drinks are naturally high in potassium and may also contain potassium additives – limit these foods and drinks

- **Potato crisps (chips)**
- **Chocolate**
- **Coffee†**
- **Custard**
- **Ice cream**
- **Fruit juices**
- **Vegetable juices**
- **Canned vegetable soup**
- **Salt substitute (KCl)**

* Whole nuts should not be given to children under 5 years of age
†Children under the age of 12 years should not have caffeine-containing drinks

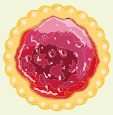
Fiber is an important part of a healthy diet for everyone and has the bonus of reducing the amount of potassium that we absorb from the food that we eat. Try to give your child some high fiber foods each day. Your dietitian will advise you how much to aim for:

.....portions of fruit or vegetables - fresh, frozen, canned (discard any fruit juice or salted water in the can) - give raw or cooked

.....portions of wholegrain bread, chapattis, breakfast cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, couscous, quinoa

Although potatoes provide some fiber and other nutrients they also have a high potassium content. Rice, pasta, noodles, couscous and quinoa are good lower potassium alternatives.

Use the table below to help you choose alternative lower potassium foods and drinks.

High potassium foods and drinks	Alternative lower potassium foods and drinks
 Breakfast cereals with chocolate	 Plain or wholegrain breakfast cereals e.g cornflakes, rice krispies, wheat biscuits, bran flakes, wheat squares
 Potato crisps and other snacks containing potato	 Corn or rice snacks, unsalted popcorn and nuts
 Chocolate biscuits	 Plain, jam-filled or wafer biscuits
 Chocolate cake, fruit cake	 Plain cake filled with cream or jam, jam tarts, doughnuts, plain scones
 Fruit juices, hi juice squash	 Lemonade, squash, cordials
 Instant coffee and coffee essence†	 Tea (black†, green† or herbal)
 Chocolate spread	 Marmalade, jam, honey
 Chocolate, marzipan, liquorice, toffee, fudge	 Boiled sweets, jellies, mints, marshmallows
 Ketchup	 Mayonnaise

†Children under the age of 12 years should not have caffeine-containing drinks.

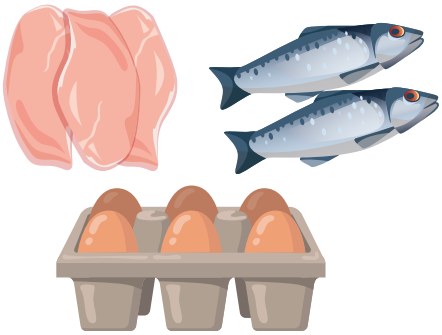
Your dietitian will help you with any changes you may need to make to your child's diet

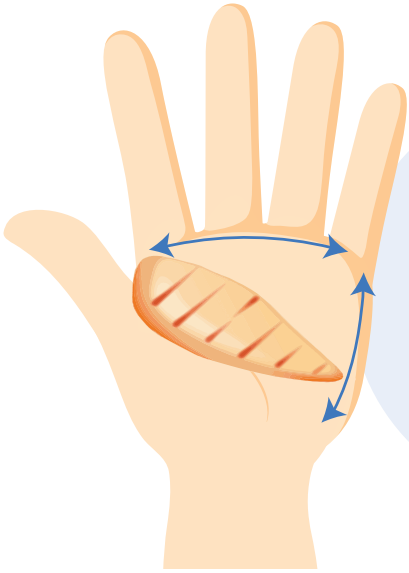
Step 3

Reduce the amount of animal-based foods that you give to your child

Meat, chicken, fish, eggs and dairy foods, like milk and yogurt, are important protein foods to have in the diet, but they also contain a lot of potassium. Try to reduce the amount of these foods that you give to your child.

Meat, chicken, fish, eggs

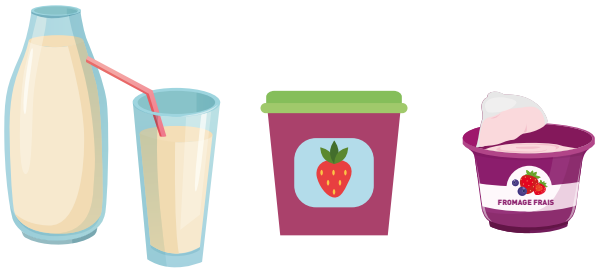




A portion that is the size of the palm of your child's hand is about right

Dairy foods

100ml of milk, 1 pot of fruit yogurt, 1 small pot of fruit-flavoured fromage frais



Limit to about 3 portions a day

Milk has a high potassium content. Plant-based milk drinks such as soy or oat drinks and low protein milk substitutes are good alternatives.

Note: Some plant-based milk drinks may contain potassium additives or phosphate additives.

It is not advised to give rice milk drinks to young children.

Your dietitian will let you know how much of these foods you can give

Step 4

Adjust cooking methods to reduce the potassium content of foods

If your child's potassium level is still high after taking the above steps, it may be helpful to 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 away the water.
- 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 away the water.

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 child's mouth.

Medications

Some medications contain potassium.

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

Notes

My dietitian is: .....

Telephone: .....

Email: .....

Notes

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Email: .....

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