

Healthy eating for your kidneys

This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your diet. If you need more detailed advice, or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.

One function of the kidneys is to remove waste products from your body. These waste products come from the breakdown of foods and drinks as well as from the natural breakdown of body cells. It is important to your overall health and well-being to eat well and keep as active as possible.

When your kidneys are not working properly, waste products can build up to harmful levels in your blood as they are not removed in your urine. This can make you feel unwell and can cause symptoms such as tiredness, nausea, loss of appetite and itching.

This sheet explains how altering your diet can help minimise the build-up of these waste products, help to keep your kidneys working as well as they can, whilst keeping you feeling as well as possible.

Tips for eating well:

1. Enjoy your food!
2. Eat regular meals
3. Aim to be a healthy weight and to be as active as possible – contact your renal dietitian if you need help with losing or gaining weight.
4. Have some fruit, vegetables or salad every day
5. Base your meals around starchy foods (e.g. bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes, pasta or rice)
6. Eat less salt



The main dietary points to be aware of include:

Salt

The recommended intake is less than 6g (1tsp) of salt each day. Salt in your diet mainly comes from that used in cooking, added at the table and hidden salt added to processed and convenience foods.

Ways to reduce your salt intake:

- use very little salt in cooking, or none at all
- try not to add salt to food at the table – this includes all types of salt such as table salt, sea salt, rock salt, celery salt and garlic salt
- avoid salt substitutes such as Bio-Salt and LoSalt and any products containing these
- try alternative flavourings such as garlic, herbs, lemon/lime juice, pepper and spices to add extra flavour
- try to avoid processed and convenience foods
- choose foods with less than 0.5g sodium (less than 1.25g salt) per 100g food
- read and compare food labels and choose lower salt alternatives

Nutrition Labelling

Salt can also be called sodium chloride. Food labels may list sodium or salt content or both.

To convert salt to sodium – divide by 2.5

e.g. A packet of crisps with 0.5g salt will contain 0.2g sodium

To convert sodium to salt – multiply by 2.5

e.g. A ready meal with 0.4g sodium per meal will contain 1g salt

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Protein

Protein is an important nutrient for health. It is needed for many functions in the body including growth, repair and development of muscle and body tissue.

Below is a general guide to how much protein you should aim to eat at light and main meals daily. It is important to remember to follow a moderate protein diet not a low protein diet. If these protein portions are a lot less than your usual intake and you are losing weight unintentionally, please seek advice from a renal dietitian.

General guide to portion sizes for:	Light meal	Main meal
Lean meat	30-60g (1-2oz)	90-120g (3-4oz)
Fish (Please note white fish is lower in phosphate than oily fish or shellfish.)	30-60g (1-2oz)	120-150g (4-5oz)
Quorn	30-60g (1-2oz)	90-120g (3-4oz)
Tofu (steamed is lower in phosphate than fried)	30-60g (1-2oz)	60-90g (2-3oz)
Pulses (dried weight)	15-30g (½-1oz)	60-90g (2-3oz)

Please seek advice on portion sizes of some of these if you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet to ensure you are eating enough protein.

Milk: daily allowance = ½ pint (284ml)

1 small yoghurt/fromage frais can be exchanged for ¼ pint (142ml) milk from your daily allowance

If you would like to use more milk than this allowance (for example in sauces, milk puddings, custard, milky drinks) use oat milk, rice milk or Coffeemate (use 60g (2oz) powder to 568ml (1 pint) water). Other coffee whiteners are available however the phosphate contents are unknown so they are not recommended.

1 egg or 30g (1oz) cheese equates to 30g (1oz) meat/fish

Eggs: maximum 4 per week

Cheese: maximum 180g/6oz per week i.e. 30-60g (1-2oz) at a snack meal or can be used as part of a main meal e.g. 3oz meat and 1oz cheese for lasagne/chilli/bolognaise



Fluid

In general, at this stage of kidney disease, there is no need to reduce the amount of fluids you drink. Please make sure you continue to aim for about 2 litres (4 pints) of fluids per day (unless you have been specifically asked to do otherwise by your kidney doctor, nurse or renal dietitian). You can include any fluids you like, however if you are following a low potassium or moderate phosphate diet, please follow any guidelines you may have been given for suitable options.



Other nutrients...

You may have heard of people following potassium and phosphate restricted diets, however there is no need to restrict your diet unless you have been specifically advised to do so by your doctor, nurse or renal dietitian.