

How to follow a Renal Diet?

If you have problems with your kidneys you need to change the diet so that it contains less potassium, phosphate and salt- known as 'renal diet'

CARBOHYDRATES:

Over one thirds of what we eat should come from carbohydrates. Good options to choose include-

- Rice
- Pasta
- Bread (without nuts, seeds & fruits)
- Noodles
- Cereals (without nuts, seeds & fruits). Good options include porridge, cornflakes, dalia.
- Potatoes. Have these only occasionally and make sure they are boiled in plenty of water which is then thrown away. This will help remove some of the potassium.

PROTEIN

Protein is important for cells, organs and muscles to function properly. It also helps us to fight infection.

Good options are:

- Fresh meat and poultry like chicken, pork, duck
- Fresh unprocessed fish without bones.
- Some seafood
- Eggs
- Plant based proteins like chickpeas, soya, tofu, lentils.

TIPS

There are two kinds of proteins. "Higher quality" proteins are found in animal products like meat, poultry, fish, and eggs. They are the easiest proteins for your body to use. "Lower quality" proteins are found in vegetables and grains. A well-balanced diet for kidney patients should include both kinds of proteins every day.

Cheese

Better options include Cottage cheese, Mozzarella cheese.

Yogurts

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES :

They contain a variety of vitamins and minerals and are a good source of fibre. We should aim for 5 portions every day.

Good choices of fruits are:

- Apples
- Pears
- Peaches
- Plums
- Watermelon
- Cucumber

Good choices of vegetables are:

- Broccoli
- Carrot
- Cabbages
- Cauliflower
- Pepper
- Peas
- Lettuce

Remember to boil the vegetables in plenty of water. This will help remove some of the potassium.

DAIRY OR DAIRY ALTERNATIVE

They are good source of protein and calcium, which is important for bone health. You should choose low fat and low sugar options.

Milk

All milk contains potassium and phosphate. You may need to reduce the amount of milk in your diet.

Other options to cow's milk include rice, soya milk.

FLUIDS

Good options for drink include-

- Water
- Cordial / Squashes.
- Light coloured fizzy drinks e.g Sprite/ 7 UP
- Tea

FATS

Any type of fat is OK to have while following a renal diet. To decrease the risk of heart disease it is better to opt for unsaturated fats. These include-

- Vegetable oils
- Rapeseed oils
- Olive oils
- Sunflower oils

All types are rich in fat and hence can increase weight.

Will I need to control any other nutrients?

You may need to balance fluids and other important nutrients too. They are:

- sodium
- phosphorus
- calcium
- potassium

TIPS

- Do NOT use salt substitutes unless approved by your doctor.
- Try fresh or dried herbs and spices instead of table salt to bring out the flavor of foods. When you limit salt, you may have to use more herbs and spices to get more flavor. Also, try adding a dash of hot pepper sauce or a squeeze of lemon juice for flavor.

Sodium

Sodium is a mineral found in most foods. It is also found in table salt. Sodium affects blood pressure and water balance in your body.

If your kidneys do not work well, sodium and fluid build up in your body. This can cause high blood pressure and other problems, like swelling of your ankles, fingers, or eyes.

You can limit sodium by avoiding table salt and foods such as:

- seasonings like soy sauce, sea salt, garlic salt,
- most canned foods and frozen foods (unless they say "low sodium"; check the label)
- processed meats like ham, bacon, hot dogs, sausage
- salted snack foods, like chips and crackers
- canned or dehydrated soups (like packaged soup)
- most restaurant foods, and fast foods*

Calcium

Calcium is a mineral that is important for building strong bones. However, foods that are good sources of calcium are often high in phosphorus. The best way to prevent calcium loss from your bones is to limit high-phosphorus foods. You may also need to take phosphate binders and avoid eating calcium-fortified foods. Your doctor may have you take a special form of vitamin D to help keep calcium and phosphorus levels in balance, and to prevent bone disease. Do not take over-the-counter vitamin D or calcium supplements unless recommended by your kidney doctor.

Foods high in fat, sugar and salt

Foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt, like crisps, biscuits, chocolate and cakes should be included in small amounts in the diet.

Better Snack options include:

- Corn or maize based crisps
- Cream crackers
- Plain popcorn

Better sweet snacks include:

- Jelly sweets
- Doughnuts
- Ginger biscuits
- Digestive biscuits

If you fancy some chocolates opt for chocolate coated varieties like Kit-Kat.

Alcohol

Men and women are advised to drink no more than 14 units of alcohol in a week and to have some alcohol free days. The guide below will help you see how many units are there in a typical drink :

- Single measure of spirits(25 ml) = 1 unit
- Small glass of wine(125 ml)= 1.5 units
- 1 bottle of beer(330 ml)= 1.7 units

It is important to include alcohol consumed in your daily fluid allowance.

Better options include

- Spirits, including Gin, Vodka, Whisky.

Phosphorous

Large amounts of phosphorus are found in:

- dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, and pudding
- nuts and peanut butter
- dried beans and peas, such as kidney beans, split peas, and lentils
- beverages such as cocoa, beer, and dark cola drinks
- bran breads and bran cereals
- processed, convenience, and fast foods

Your kidneys may not be able to remove all of this extra phosphorus. What happens when phosphorus builds up in your blood? Your blood calcium levels drop and calcium is pulled from the bones. Over time, your bones will become weak and break easily. A high level of phosphorus in your blood may also cause calcium to build up in your blood vessels, heart, joints, muscles, and skin, where it does not belong. This may cause serious problems such as:

- damage to the heart and other organs
- poor blood circulation
- bone pain
- skin ulcers

To keep phosphorus at safe levels , you may need to limit phosphorus-rich foods. You may also need to take a type of medicine called a *phosphate binder*. These binders are taken with your meals and snacks.

What if I have diabetes?

You may need to make a few changes in your diet if you have diabetes and kidney disease. If your doctor says that you should eat less protein, your diet may need to include more carbohydrates or high-quality fats to give you enough calories. Work with your dietitian to make a meal plan that is right for you. Ask your doctor how often to test your blood sugar levels. Try to keep your levels under control. Your dosage of insulin or other medications may need to change if your kidney disease gets worse.

Source: Oxford University Hospitals, NHS Foundation Trust

National Kidney Foundation

Courtesy: Arghya Banerjee

Important website: www.kidney.org