

Healthy Eating: How to Get the Right Amount of Potassium



Potassium is a mineral in your cells that helps your nerves and muscles work right. The right balance of potassium also keeps your heart beating at a steady rate. Potassium is found in milk, meats, and all fresh foods.

Some health problems and medicines can cause high or low levels of potassium. A level that is too high or too low can be dangerous. If your levels are high or low, you may need to change

Foods high in potassium

A balanced diet generally contains enough potassium for the body's needs. If you have low potassium levels, you may need to eat more of these foods. If you have high potassium levels, you may need to avoid them.

All unprocessed whole foods have a lot of potassium. Any processing that breaks open the cells (mashing, blending) allows the potassium to leach out. Foods with high amounts include fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes (dried beans and peas), and meats.

the way you eat. If you need help, ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian, an expert in healthy eating.

What can affect your potassium levels?

- Kidney problems
- Hormone levels in your body
- Vomiting too much
- Diarrhea
- Cancer treatments
- Certain medicines
- Taking too much potassium as a supplement

Signs of high or low levels

You may have abnormal potassium levels if you have:

- Muscle weakness.
- Paralysis.
- Confusion.
- Changes in heart rhythm.

High-potassium foods

Fruits	Vegetables	Other
Tomatoes and tomato products	Beet greens	White beans
Oranges	Potatoes	Condensed milk
Dates	Winter Squash	Soybeans
Raisins	Spinach	Lima beans
Grapefruit	Sweet potatoes	Halibut
Plantains	Iceberg lettuce	Evaporated milk
Plums	Lentils	Chestnuts
Papayas	Peas	Rockfish
Tangerines	Carrot juice	Baked beans
Cantaloupe	Artichokes	Pinto beans
Bananas	Cabbage	Semisweet chocolate
Apricots	Parsnips and Rutabagas	Oat bran
Peaches	Okra	Yogurt
Kiwi fruit	Avocados	Peanuts

If you have kidney disease, limit how much potassium you eat. If you want to eat some high-potassium vegetables but you have kidney disease or are on dialysis, try leaching. It is a way to remove some of the potassium. Ask your dietitian or kidney doctor what amount of leached high-potassium vegetables is safe for you to eat.

To leach potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, beets, and rutabagas:

- Peel the vegetables, then soak them in a large amount of water for several hours.
- Pour off the water, and rinse the vegetables before cooking.