

Reducing potassium

Including Ghanaian and Nigerian foods

Choose low potassium snacks/puddings

Choose biscuits (plain, jam*, cream-filled*), cakes*, 'Chin-chin*', 'puff-puff*', emo dokuno*, esikyre dokonu*, non-potato based savoury snacks (corn or rice based), doughnuts*, crackers, breadsticks, or alkaki.

Limit snacks containing large amounts of chocolate, potato, cassava, dried fruit*, seeds, nuts or coconut.

Foods marked with a * are high in sugar, if you have diabetes, continue to limit the sweet foods eaten. These snack foods are high in energy so if you are trying to lose weight, try to limit these.

Limit coconut, seeds and nuts (for example banga or egusi soup) in dishes

If you are adding coconut, seeds and nuts or groundnuts to dishes please discuss with your Dietitian as seeds and nuts are high in potassium.

Limit juices and coconut water

Squash/cordial or fizzy drinks are suitable alternatives.

Avoid akanwu/kanwa/kaun (Nigerian food tenderiser) and salt substitutes

Akanwu (potash/ 'Rock Salt') is used in Nigerian cooking as a tenderiser-avoid using this as it contains large amounts of potassium.

Lo Salt and Saxa SoLo are salt substitutes that contain large amounts of potassium, therefore these are best avoided.

WARNING:

Salt substitutes e.g. Lo Salt, Reduced sodium salt or Saxa SoLo, are made from potassium salts and must not be used. Avoid any manufactured foods containing these products.

For further questions, please contact the King's Renal Dietitians on 0203 299 6250

Notes

King's College Hospital 
NHS Foundation Trust

Published by:
The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics
King's College Hospital
London SE5 9RS

July 2014



A simple guide to following a low potassium diet whilst enjoying West African cuisine.

Potassium is a mineral found in foods that is normally removed by the kidney. When your kidney function has dropped you may need to be careful with the amount of potassium you eat.

A high potassium level (ideal = 3.5-5.5mmols/l or up to 6.0mmols/l for those on haemodialysis) can cause an irregular heart beat and therefore could cause your heart to stop if the level rises.

Choose low potassium starchy foods

Starchy foods such as grains and foods made from grain e.g. wheat products have very small amounts of potassium.

Cornmeal, rice, semolina, millet, banku, tuwo shinkafa (rice balls), tuwo masara (corn), ugali, kenkey, tuo zaafi, tapioca, pasta, bread, crackers, and breakfast cereals (without dried fruit/nuts), are also low in potassium.

Boil vegetables to lower the potassium content

All vegetables contain potassium, but there are many low potassium vegetables that can be included in the diet.

Boiling and draining removes some potassium from these foods but steaming, stewing or frying holds the potassium in the food. If you are making a stew, try to par or pre-boil and drain the vegetables before adding to stews or casseroles.

Canned vegetables that have been drained also have less potassium.

Lower potassium	Higher potassium
Cordials/ fruit squash, fizzy drinks	Fruit and vegetable juices, evaporated milk
Tangerines/Satsumas, Grapes, berries	Bananas, rhubarb, Avocado
Apples, pears	Large stoned fruit e.g Apricots, Mango
Tinned fruit with juice drained e.g. mango	Custard Apple
Pineapple	Coconut and coconut containing products
Aubergine, broccoli, cabbage, carrots	
Lettuce, Cho-cho, peppers, drumstick leaves, cocoyam leaves, bitter leaves	Taro leaves, amaranth leaves
Green beans, garden eggs, carrots, squash/ pumpkin, marrow, spring greens, mustard leaves, sweetcorn, water chestnuts	Melon seeds
Tinned okra, Tinned cerasse/African cucumber	Fresh okra and fresh cerasse/African Cucumber

2 portions (1 portion= 3 tablesp/80g) of vegetables can be eaten each day.

Tinned and fresh tomatoes are moderate in potassium, they can be used within your vegetable allowance. Tomato puree is higher in potassium so consider using tinned tomatoes instead.

Many of the West African leafy green vegetables are high in potassium, avoid the very high ones and limit the other ones (for example cocoyam or bitter leaves) to no more than twice per week and if you are on haemodialysis, avoid these over the weekend/long period without dialysis or if your blood level is more than 6mmols/l.

2 portions of fruit can also be taken each day.

A portion is approximately what fits in your hand.

Boil all starchy vegetables (tubers) e.g. yam, plantain, sweet potato, eddoes, dasheen, breadfruit and only have maximum once per day.

If you are planning on frying, try par-boiling first to remove some potassium. Try to only have starchy vegetables for a maximum of 1 meal per day (150g/day).

Instant fufu may be high in potassium as the starchy vegetable (e.g. yam, plantain, cassava) is not pre-boiled.