



RDN Resources for Consumers:

Vegetarian Diets in Chronic Kidney Disease

Whether you are lacto-ovo vegetarian or vegan, your food choices can be adapted to a diet designed for kidney disease management

Chronic Kidney Disease

Research shows that a plant-based diet may slow down some complications of chronic kidney disease (CKD) such as heart disease, protein loss in urine and the progression of kidney damage. The National Kidney Foundation recommends a vegetarian diet as beneficial for CKD patients.

Treatment for kidney disease includes a meal plan that will help lower the levels of protein, potassium, sodium, fluid and phosphorus in your body. Carefully following a meal plan that meets your individual needs will help keep nutrients in your blood at normal levels, lessen the amounts of fluids your body retains and prevent bone loss.

There is no one diet that is right for everyone with kidney disease. And, your individual meal plan will change over time. It is important to consult with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) for personalized health recommendations and meal plans. Your doctor and registered dietitian nutritionist will determine the levels of protein, potassium, sodium fluid and phosphorus that your meal plan should provide.

Nutrients of Special Concern

Protein

About two-thirds of protein in your meal plan should come from high quality protein sources. Below are the best sources of high quality plant proteins, including lacto-ovo and vegan choices.

High Quality Protein Sources*

Lower Phosphorus

Egg white
 Lentils
 Peanut butter
 Soy milk
 Tempeh
 Tofu

Higher Phosphorus

Cheese (american, cheddar)
 Cooked, dried beans
 Egg yolk
 Milk (cows)
 Tahini
 Sunflower seeds
 Yogurt

**Check with your RDN or doctor for appropriate serving sizes*

Phosphorus

Phosphorus often needs to be limited, even if blood phosphorus levels are normal. The levels of phosphorus are not always listed on the Nutrition Facts label, so it is important to understand which foods have higher phosphorus levels. Some vegetarian options such as milk, cheese, yogurt, cooked beans and nuts are high in phosphorus. These foods should not exceed recommended amounts.

Plant based protein sources of phosphorus are generally less absorbed than animal based sources. Ultra processed foods may contain large amounts of phosphorus as a preservative, which is highly absorbed. As an example, dark carbonated beverages and bottled iced teas may contain phosphorus as a preservative, so it is best to stick with water or homemade herbal teas.

Check the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) nutrient database for more detailed information on phosphorus levels in foods:

<https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/>

Potassium

Your doctor or RDN will let you know if you need to avoid or limit fruits and vegetables that are high in potassium. Listed below are some examples of low potassium fruits and vegetables.

Examples of lower potassium vegetables

Sprouts (bean, alfalfa)
Beets
Cabbage
Cauliflower
Corn
Cucumber
Endive
Eggplant
Lettuce (all types)
Mushrooms
Onions

Examples of lower potassium fruits

Apple
Blackberries
Blueberries
Grapes
Lemon
Peach (canned)
Pineapple
Raspberries
Strawberries
Watermelon

Source: Nutrition Care Manual

Sodium

Most foods contain sodium, however, processed and canned foods typically have higher amounts. If you rely on processed or convenience vegetarian food such as meat alternatives, you may be consuming too much sodium. Be sure to check the Nutrition Facts label for each food's sodium level per serving.

Examples of High Sodium Foods

Convenience foods:

Frozen meals
Canned or dried soups
Canned beans
Canned vegetables with salt added
Vegetable miso
Processed cheese
Salted snack foods

Meat alternative examples:

Veggie burgers
Tofu hot dogs
Frozen meal entrée

Condiments:

Soy and teriyaki sauces
Salt, including sea salt
Garlic, onion and seasoned salts

Fluid

You may be on a fluid-restricted diet. Fluid is defined as anything liquid at room temperature, such as water, tea, coffee, soda, gelatin, ice cream, and sherbet. Follow your doctor's or dietitian's instructions regarding fluid intake.



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Vitamins and Minerals

Discuss vitamin and mineral supplements with your doctor and dietitian. A vitamin, and possibly mineral, supplement may be beneficial when following a diet modified in potassium, phosphorus and protein.

An over-the-counter multivitamin may be adequate for your needs. Also, be sure to let your doctor and dietitian know about any dietary supplements or herbal products that you are taking.



Find a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

A registered dietitian nutritionist can help you develop a healthy vegetarian eating plan that meets your needs.

To find an RDN in your area, visit <https://vegetariannutrition.net/find-a-registered-dietitian/>

