

Kidney Failure and Your Diet

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WHAT IS KIDNEY FAILURE?

The human body has two kidneys, which are located below the rib cage on either side of the spine. The kidneys maintain body fluids. They prompt the production of urine when body fluid is too high, and they retain fluid when body fluid is too low. The kidneys also help regulate blood

pressure and remove food waste from the blood.

Poor functioning of the kidneys is called “kidney failure.” Kidney failure can be “acute” or “chronic.”

Acute kidney failure can have many causes, including infection, burns, severe diarrhea or vomiting, injury, or kidney blockage. Once the underlying cause is corrected, the kidney continues to function.

Chronic kidney failure is ongoing loss of kidney function. It can result from medical conditions such as hypertension and diabetes. It may also be the result of heredity. Chronic kidney failure is also called “end stage renal disease” (ESRD).

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF KIDNEY FAILURE?

The symptoms of kidney failure include:

- Lower back pain
- Burning during urination
- Discolored urine

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- Change in the frequency of urination
- High blood pressure
- Swelling of the eyes, ankles, and wrists

WHAT FOODS SHOULD I AVOID?

The kidneys remove waste from the body. If the kidneys fail, certain waste products cannot be easily eliminated. These waste products may then build up in the bloodstream.

Foods that contain **protein, potassium, sodium, and phosphorus** produce waste products that are difficult for failing kidneys to process. Therefore, you may need to monitor your food and fluid intake carefully so that you limit these substances in your diet.

Protein

Waste products produced by the digestion of protein are usually removed in the urine. If they are not removed, they remain in the bloodstream. These waste products are measured as blood urea nitrogen (BUN). People with high levels of BUN may experience nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and fatigue.

You should eat a diet that is not too high in protein. Foods with high amounts of protein should be limited. They are:

- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish
- Eggs
- Dairy products

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Potassium

Potassium is found in many foods. If your kidneys cannot remove potassium from your body, you may get irregular heartbeats. Excess potassium can even cause your heart to stop.

Your doctor may tell you to limit or avoid the following foods:

- Avocado
- Asparagus
- Beets
- Brussels sprouts
- Dried peas
- Dried beans
- Greens
- Potatoes
- Sweet potatoes or yams
- Pumpkin
- Squash
- Tomatoes
- Bananas
- Melons
- Apricots
- Dried fruits
- Citrus fruits
- Papaya
- Plantain
- Nuts
- Chocolate
- Juices
- Milk
- Yogurt

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Sodium

Sodium, or salt, is in almost all foods. Most people eat too much salt. Patients with kidney failure are unable to remove excess salt from their bodies. They often become thirsty and retain fluid.

You should avoid foods that are high in sodium, including:

- Table salt
- Spices that have salt
- Lunch meats
- Processed meats
- Frozen foods
- Canned vegetables
- Pickles
- Dairy products
- Chips
- Nuts

Look for low-salt products in your supermarket. You can also use herbs and salt-free spices to season your foods.

Do not use salt substitutes, because they contain potassium.

Phosphorus

Excess phosphorus in the body can cause your bones to weaken and break easily.

Most patients with kidney failure take medications called phosphorus binders. They may also take calcium and vitamin D supplements.

You should limit foods that are high in phosphorus, such as:

- Dairy products (cheese, milk, yogurt)
- Whole grains
- Nuts

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- Dried peas and beans
- Beer
- Chocolate
- Bran

Fluids

Patients with kidney failure cannot eliminate excess fluid from the body. As a result, too much fluid can cause:

- Swelling
- High blood pressure
- Shortness of breath
- Heart failure

You will need to limit the amount of fluid you consume each day. Fluid includes:

- Liquids you drink
- Liquids in foods such as fruits and vegetables
- Sherbet
- Gelatin

Your fluid intake should be _____ cups per day. If you are thirsty, try chewing gum or sucking on hard candy.

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WHAT FOODS CAN I EAT?

You need to eat enough calories to give you strength. Foods that are typically safe to eat include:

- Fats, such as butter, margarine, and oils
- Sugars, such as candy, honey, and jelly
- Starches, such as rice and white bread

Fruits and vegetables you can eat:

Food

Daily Amount

Other foods you can eat:
