

Healthy Eating Guidelines For People with Early Chronic Kidney Disease

Your kidneys are bean-shaped organs about the size of a fist. Most people have two kidneys, one on each side of the spine just below the rib cage. The kidneys main functions are to:

- Regulate the amount of water in the body
- Get rid of waste products
- Balance minerals such as calcium
- Make hormones, such as the ones that control blood pressure and red blood cell production.

There are five stages of chronic kidney disease (CKD). In early stages (1 and 2), your kidneys may work well enough that you do not have any symptoms. At each stage the body is less able to get rid of extra water and waste.

In early kidney disease, the main goal is to help your kidneys function better for longer. Eating a variety of healthy foods such as vegetables and fruits, whole grains and protein foods can help. If you have high blood pressure or diabetes, manage these conditions through lifestyle changes and taking any medication prescribed by your doctor. A dietitian can help you plan a diet that is suitable for all your health conditions.

If your kidneys continue to lose function, your doctor or a dietitian may advise you to make other changes to your diet. There is no one diet that is right for everyone with kidney disease.



Steps you can take

1. Get enough protein, but not too much.

Protein is important for building and repairing body tissues, healing wounds and fighting infection. Not eating enough protein may cause muscle loss and malnutrition, but eating too much protein may lower kidney function. Most adults need about 0.8 - 1.0 gram of protein per kilogram body weight.

- Eat a variety of protein foods as part of a healthy eating pattern. Protein is in legumes, nuts, seeds, tofu, fortified soy beverage, fish, shellfish, eggs, poultry, lean red meat including wild game, lower fat milk, lower fat yogurt, lower fat kefir, and cheeses lower in fat and sodium.
- Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with protein foods at meals. Examples include: $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cooked beans, lentils or tofu; $\frac{1}{4}$ cup nuts or seeds; 75g (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz) meat, fish or poultry; 2 eggs; $\frac{3}{4}$ cup yogurt; 50g (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz) cheese; or 1 cup milk or fortified soy beverage.

2. Limit sodium to about 2000mg per day. Too much sodium may lead to high blood pressure and swelling in your ankles and feet. Most Canadians eat too much sodium. The main source of sodium is processed foods including bakery products, appetizers, entrees, deli meats, hot dogs, cheese, soups, sauces, and condiments.

- If you eat processed foods high in sodium eat them less often and in smaller amounts. Choose low sodium or no sodium versions.
- Use the food label to help you choose foods lower in sodium. The percent daily value (%DV) shows you if the food has a little or a lot of sodium. 5% DV or less is a little. 15% DV or more is a lot.
- Cook from scratch more often using fruits and vegetables, whole grains and protein foods that are lower in sodium.
- Limit salt as it is high in sodium. Flavour your food with garlic, onion, lemon, ginger, and spices such as basil, cilantro or mint.
- Do not use salt substitutes that contain potassium.

3. Drink enough water to stay well hydrated. In general, if your urine is light yellow or clear it means you are drinking enough. You do not need to limit fluids unless your doctor advises you to.

4. Avoid added phosphates. This type of phosphorus is well absorbed and can build up in the body. This can lead to itchy skin, painful joints and weak bones. Processed foods, fast foods, colas, dark sodas, and some iced teas may contain added phosphate. Read food labels. Check the ingredient list for the term “phosph” as part of the word to find out if the food has phosphate additives. Examples are sodium phosphate and phosphoric acid.

5. You do not need to limit potassium and naturally occurring phosphorus unless your blood levels are high and your doctor advises you to.

6. Get support if you are concerned about your weight.

- Being underweight can make you more likely to develop complications from kidney disease.
- If you have extra weight, losing weight may help slow the loss of kidney function and help manage blood sugar and blood pressure.
- Speak to your doctor or a dietitian if you are:
 - Underweight
 - Losing weight without trying
 - Having trouble eating or
 - Wanting advice on how to make changes to your diet.

7. Check with your doctor before taking any natural health product such as herbs, vitamins and minerals as they may be harmful to your kidneys.

8. Talk with your doctor about whether or not you can drink alcohol.

9. Be active to improve your health and manage chronic conditions. Participating in physical activity is safe for most people. If you have a medical condition or an injury, check with your doctor or a qualified exercise professional before becoming more active.

10. Be smoke free. Smoking may speed up the loss of kidney function.



Additional Resources

For information and advice based on your specific food and nutrition needs and preferences, call **8-1-1** and ask to speak to a HealthLink BC dietitian.

For additional information, see the following:

- HealthLink BC www.healthlinkbc.ca – Get medically approved non-emergency health information.
- Dietitian Services Fact Sheets available by mail (call **8-1-1**) or visit www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity

- Healthy Eating Guidelines for Lower Sodium Eating <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/food-and-nutrition/sodium/healthy-eating-guidelines-lower-sodium>
- Food Sources of Sodium <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/food-sources-sodium>
- Quick Nutrition Check for Protein <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/food-and-nutrition/nutrients/quick-nutrition-check-protein>
- Quick Nutrition Check for Protein: Sample Menus <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/food-and-nutrition/nutrients/quick-nutrition-check-protein-sample>

These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.



Notes

Distributed by:

Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to www.healthlinkbc.ca or call **8-1-1** (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.