

Hemodialysis and Your Diet

Last Updated: August 28, 2024
Medically reviewed by [NKF Patient Education Team](#)

Diet is a key part of your hemodialysis treatment. You may need to limit fluids and change your intake of some foods and condiments.

About Hemodialysis

At the point of your dialysis, your body is not well-nourished. Your dialysis treatment removes

- Your lab tests
- How much fluid you can drink
- Your hemoglobin levels
- Your nutrition status
 - Healthy albumin levels
 - Healthy weight (not gaining or losing too much weight)
 - Gaining or losing too much weight (not staying at a healthy dry weight)
 - Healthy blood levels of a protein called albumin. Albumin is a type of protein in your blood. If the albumin level is too low, it may mean you are not eating enough protein or calories.
 - Healthy blood levels of other nutrition-related labs such as vitamins and minerals

Get Ready: Kidney Heroes Giving Day is August 19th

Make your early gift today and unlock a special thank you.

[Give Now](#)

fluid from your body. This can lead to dehydration at the dialysis center.

fewer complications.

keeping a healthy weight.

The Basics of Good Nutrition on Hemodialysis

When you're on hemodialysis, you usually need to:

- Eat more high protein foods

- Eat less foods high in sodium and salt
- Eat less potassium
- Eat less phosphorus
- Drink and eat less fluid, including coffee, tea, water, soup, and any food that is liquid at room temperature

These diet changes are usually needed more for people who dialyze in-center three times per week. If you do frequent daily or nocturnal home hemodialysis, there will likely be fewer limits on food and fluid intake.

The Reas

In general, cl
example, lim
the health of
hemodialysis

On the other
that function
your kidneys
cells. One im
pressure goe
don't build u
(sugar) goals

Get Ready: Kidney Heroes Giving Day is August 19th

Make your early gift today and unlock a
special thank you.

Give Now



For
improve
l on

an to keep
ins that
j red blood
ood
:hat you
ucose

How to Fo

Your kidney dietitian will show you how to:

- Read nutrition facts labels on foods
- Make the best food choices
- Measure your fluid intake
- Take the right nutrition supplements

Your dietitian will also make a diet plan that fits your needs based on the foods and drinks that you like. Your dietitian may also work with your social worker if you are having trouble paying for or finding the foods you need.

Nutrients

The next sections below describe the nutrients that need extra attention when you’re on hemodialysis. All nutrients are important, but eating the right amount of these nutrients will help you feel better on hemodialysis.

Protein

People on he
protein level
heal faster, a
pork, fish, eg
every day.



lood
ounds
ltry, and
foods

Sodium

For people o
Sodium intak
This means a
listed on the
sodium whei
chips. Less s
helps reduce

Get Ready: Kidney Heroes Giving Day is August 19th

Make your early gift today and unlock a
special thank you.

[Give Now](#)

lse.
of salt.
of sodium
amount of
and
ients and
ge.

Potassium

Limits on pot
hemodialysis
discuss options with your dietitian.

quent

The potassium from meat and dairy products is absorbed more easily than from fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds. So a plant-based diet is possible when you’re on hemodialysis. However, you may need to limit portion sizes of certain plant-based foods when your potassium levels are very high. Avoid foods with additives like acesulfame potassium and potassium sorbate, as they are easily absorbed. Do not use salt substitutes that contain potassium.

When potassium in the blood is too high or too low this can cause heart problems and even death. Therefore, it’s very important to keep track of your potassium levels. Potassium binders are medications that can lower your potassium levels, and they may make it possible to add more foods to your diet. Your healthcare team can also adjust the dialysate (the cleansing fluid used during dialysis) to help lower your potassium.

Phosphorus

Phosphorus levels in the blood can become too high in kidney failure. Hemodialysis does not effectively remove phosphorus. This leads to weak bones and phosphorus binding with calcium to settle into blood vessels and the heart. Therefore, you may need to limit phosphorus in your diet, depending on your lab results. The best way to improve your diet overall and to decrease your phosphorus load is to avoid processed foods. Check labels for additives with PHOS, such as disodium phosphate. Phosphate additives are inorganic and are much more easily absorbed. Plant-based foods with organic phosphates like nuts and seeds are absorbed less. Animal-based foods like meat and dairy products have inorganic phosphates that are more easily absorbed. Therefore, eating more plant-based healthy foods instead of processed foods will decrease the phosphorus load. Phosphorus binders and phosphorus blockers are medications that also lower your phosphorus levels, and they may make it possible to add more foods to your diet.

Fluid

People on in-
much urine t
people on hc
dietitian will

A sudden inc
pressure ma
having any o
dietitian for c

Fluid is any f

- ice
- beverages
- frozen dess
- gelatin
- gravy and s

Calories

Calories give you energy from all the foods you eat and beverages you drink. The number of calories you should have are based on individual needs and your dietitian will work with you to determine the right number for you. Age, weight, height, sex, exercise level, and other factors are considered. An important goal is to get your calories from nutrient-dense foods, which means foods that have a lot of healthy nutrients for the number of calories you take in. For example, you will get a lot of healthy nutrients from a fruit rather than a candy bar, and most likely the candy bar will add more calories that are less healthy because it has more sugar and fat.

Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamin and mineral needs are also specific to each person. Eating a wide variety of foods gives your body the vitamins and minerals it needs each day. In addition to a good diet, your healthcare

Get Ready: Kidney Heroes
Giving Day is August 19th

Make your early gift today and unlock a
special thank you.

Give Now


×

on how
day. Most
or

od
you are
your

professional may order special vitamin and mineral supplements. Kidney disease and dialysis change the amounts of vitamins and minerals your body needs. Also, your special diet may limit some food groups that would normally provide important vitamins and minerals. Take only those supplements ordered by your kidney healthcare professional, since certain vitamins and minerals can be harmful if you are on dialysis. Also, check with your healthcare professional before using any herbal remedies or any other type of dietary supplement, as some of these may be harmful for people with kidney disease.

Additional Considerations and Your Kidney Dietitian

As is true for all people, the diet for people on hemodialysis should be heart healthy. This means limiting many types of fats, including saturated fats.  Our diet might not be as high in protein as you work with. If you have diabetes, you may need to limit your carbohydrate intake. If you have heart disease, you may need to limit your sodium intake. If you have kidney disease, you may need to limit your fluid intake. If you have any of these conditions, your dietitian can help you create a diet that is healthy for you.

Metabolic acidosis can lead to muscle and bone loss. Your dialysis treatment can help, but you may need to eat more protein-based foods. If you're losing weight, your nutrition specialist can help you gain weight.

Get Ready: Kidney Heroes Giving Day is August 19th

Make your early gift today and unlock a special thank you.

[Give Now](#)

and donate in support of your favorite animal shelter. You can also donate to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) or the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Question

- How often should I eat?
- What can I do to improve my diet so I can feel better on hemodialysis?
- Am I gaining too much water weight between my hemodialysis treatments?
- Do I need a nutritional supplement?

More resources

- Nutrition and Hemodialysis
- 6 Kidney Disease Diet Myths

- Managing Fluid as A CKD Patient
- PLANT-BASED DIETS: KIDNEY FAILURE AND KIDNEY TRANSPLANT
- If You Need to Limit Potassium
- If You Need to Limit Phosphorus
- If You Need to Limit Sodium

This content is provided for informational use only and is not intended as medical advice or as a substitute for the medical advice of a healthcare professional.

© 2025 Nati



Get Ready: Kidney Heroes Giving Day is August 19th

Make your early gift today and unlock a
special thank you.

[Give Now](#)