

Kidney-friendly eating plan: Myths vs facts



We are busting the myths so you can know the facts about eating healthy with kidney disease. Talk with your dietitian about how to follow a kidney-friendly eating plan.

Myth: Whole grains are not part of a kidney-healthy eating plan because they are high in phosphorus and potassium.

Fact: Whole grains are part of a kidney-healthy eating plan and have many benefits.

- Your body absorbs less of the phosphorus in whole grains compared to other foods, such as meat and packaged foods.
- Whole grains provide more fiber than refined grains. The amount of whole grains you should have a day is:
 - 38 grams if you are a man
 - 25 grams if you are a woman
- Whole grains help:
 - Good bacteria grow in your digestive tract to prevent digestive diseases, such as constipation, colon or stomach cancer.

Whole grains include foods with the “Whole grain” stamp and foods that have “Whole” listed as the first ingredient, such as brown rice, oats or whole wheat.

- Your blood sugar levels stay in a normal range.
- You feel full longer, which keeps you from overeating and helps you lose weight.

Myth: Because of kidney disease, I cannot eat fruits or veggies because they are high in potassium. I cannot eat bananas, avocados or orange juice.

Fact: There are many low-potassium fruits and vegetables you can eat as part of a kidney-friendly eating plan.

- Your dietitian can tell you how much potassium you can eat. If you need a potassium restriction, there are many low potassium fruits and vegetables, such as:
 - Blueberries
 - Strawberries
 - Carrots
 - Cauliflower
- It is important to include fruits and vegetables in your meal plan because they help with weight loss and digestion. They can also help slow your kidney disease from getting worse.

Myth: I cannot eat beans, nuts or seeds because of kidney disease.

Fact: Beans, nuts and seeds are a great source of protein and fiber as part of a kidney-friendly eating plan.

- Beans, nuts and seeds are plant proteins that give you fiber and nutrients.
- For beans, choose chickpeas and green peas because they are lowest in potassium.
- For nuts, choose macadamias, pecans and walnuts because they are lowest in potassium.
- The American Heart Association recommends eating six ounces of nuts per week—try eating about one ounce a day (about one palmful a day) to help with constipation. A study showed this did not raise potassium or phosphorus levels.

Myth: I need to eat more meat if I have low albumin levels (albumin is the main protein in blood).

Fact: Your dietitian will tell you how much protein you need and recommend plant proteins to eat.

- Your albumin levels may not be caused by foods you are or are not eating. For example, other causes of low albumin levels include

Inflammation (swelling), another illness, drinking too many fluids or liver problems.

- Eating meat proteins can cause inflammation. Instead, eat plant proteins, such as beans, nuts and seeds, which are good for heart health.

Myth: If my lab results are normal and dialysis cleans my blood, I can eat whatever I want.

Fact: Your current dialysis treatment is based on your current lab results. If you change what you are eating, your labs and dialysis treatment may also need to change.

- Following a kidney-friendly eating plan can help lower waste products in your blood, so dialysis can work better to clean your blood. If you have high levels of certain nutrients in your blood, like phosphorus, dialysis cannot totally remove them.
- If you change what you are eating, your labs may get out of range. For example, your lab results for phosphorus, potassium, calcium or sodium may change. This means your medicine needs may also change.
- To keep your labs in a healthy range and feel your best, it is important to take all your medicines as your doctor prescribed and attend the full length of all your dialysis treatments.

Learn more about kidney-friendly eating at [medicalkitchen.ae](https://www.medicalkitchen.ae)