



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Eating Well for Chronic kidney disease

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

**Department of Nutrition and Dietetics**

Scarborough Hospital  
Telephone: 01723 342415  
Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL

York Hospital  
Telephone: 01904 725269  
Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
What do your kidneys do? .....	3
What can you do to help look after your kidneys?.....	3
If you have diabetes – why is it important to control your blood glucose levels? .....	4
What changes can you make to your diet? .....	4
Eating a healthy diet.....	5
Are you a healthy weight? .....	6
If you are overweight .....	7
Salt and your health .....	8
Reducing your salt intake .....	9
Reading food labels.....	12
Fruit and vegetables .....	13
Eat the right amount of protein .....	14
What about dairy? .....	15
Alcohol .....	16
Changing the type and amounts of fats in your diet.....	17
What if you have a poor appetite or need to make a lot of changes to your diet? .....	19
What about exercise? .....	20
Additional resources and useful websites .....	21
Tell us what you think of this leaflet .....	23
Teaching, training and research.....	23
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).....	23
Leaflets in alternative languages or formats .....	24

## **What do your kidneys do?**

The kidneys have a number of important functions. These include clearing waste products and toxins from the blood stream, control of salt and water balance and control of blood pressure.

## **What can you do to help look after your kidneys?**

If you know your kidneys are not working as well as they should do, there are a number of factors that can help to look after your kidney function and to reduce the risk of developing complications.

These include:

- Good control of your blood pressure.
- Maintaining a healthy body weight.
- Controlling your blood fats.
- If you have diabetes, good control of your blood sugars.
- Stopping smoking.
- Regular exercise.

You can do a lot to help by making changes to your diet and lifestyle.

## **If you have diabetes – why is it important to control your blood glucose levels?**

Even if diabetes is not the cause of your kidney problems, good blood sugar control can help stabilise kidney function. This means that is very important that you follow the advice that you have been given about good diabetes control. If you want to know more about controlling your diabetes in order to look after your kidneys then please discuss this with your GP or diabetes team.

## **What changes can you make to your diet?**

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Reduce your salt intake.
- Include at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- Keep to recommended alcohol guidelines.
- Eat the right type and amount of fat.
- Eat the right amount of protein.

# Eating a healthy diet

- Whatever changes you make to your diet it is still important to make sure that you include the right balance of foods and drinks.
- Aim to eat a wide variety of foods to ensure you get all the nutrients your body needs.
- Eat three regular meals per day.
- Base meals around carbohydrate foods – breads, cereals, rice, pasta or potatoes. Choose wholegrain options of these foods.
- Foods that contain protein are needed for repair and replacement of body tissues. Most of us eat more protein than we actually need. Aim to have a small portion of meat, fish, egg or pulses at two meals each day.
- Milk and milk products provide protein, calcium and some vitamins. Choose low fat options where possible.
- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day. They give us fibre and a range of vitamins and minerals.

## **Are you a healthy weight?**

It is not good for your health to be either overweight or underweight.

If your body weight is low or if you are losing weight without trying you may not be getting enough of all the nutrients that your body requires. If this is the case, please ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian.

If you are overweight, you are more likely to suffer from high blood pressure. So, lifestyle alterations may be needed to help you to reduce your weight.

## **If you are overweight**

Weight loss should be steady and slow – aiming for one to two pounds per week.

Try to make the following changes to your diet:

- Avoid fried foods.
- Use semi skimmed or skimmed milk.
- Cut down on cakes, pastries and biscuits.
- Cut down on sweets and chocolates.
- Use diet or no added sugar drinks.
- Do not add sugar to tea and coffee.
- Cut the fat off meat and take the skin off chicken.
- Have smaller portion sizes.
- Eat slowly and chew the food well.
- Do not miss meals – avoid becoming too hungry and have fruit in between meals if necessary.
- Aim to have three meals per day.
- Avoid a high alcohol intake  
(see alcohol intake guidelines in this booklet).

# **Salt and your health**

Eating too much salt has been linked with having high blood pressure and Chronic Kidney Disease.

Cutting down the amount of salt you eat by a fairly small amount can help.

## **What is the daily limit?**

It is recommended that we consume no more than 6g of salt a day (one teaspoon).

The salt that occurs naturally in fresh foods is enough to provide the small amount of salt that your body needs.

## **Where does salt come from?**

You do not have to add salt to food to be eating too much. About three quarters of the salt we eat is hidden in processed foods. Manufacturers add salt to food as a preservative and flavour enhancer. These foods do not necessarily taste salty and it is therefore important to look at the food labels to help you make lower salt choices.

## **What about salt substitutes?**

We do not recommend that you use a salt substitute. Salt substitutes are made from a mixture of potassium chloride and sodium chloride and using them in place of salt will not help your taste to adjust to a lower salt intake.



# Reducing your salt intake

Not adding salt to foods is a small, but important, part of reducing your salt intake to help you get used to a less salty taste. Cutting down on processed foods can also make a big difference to your intake.

## High salt food choices

The following foods are almost always high in salt. Eat them less often or have smaller amounts:

- Anchovies
- Bacon
- Gravy granules
- Ham
- Olives
- Packet soups and noodles
- Pickles
- Prawns
- Processed and tinned meats
- Processed cheese and cheese spreads
- Salami and chorizo
- Salted and dry roast nuts
- Salt fish
- Smoked meat and fish
- Soy sauce and bouillon
- Stock cubes
- Yeast extract and Marmite

## **Foods to check for the salt content**

The salt content of the following foods can vary between brands. Using food labels will help you to choose the brand or variety that is lower in salt.

- Baked beans.
- Bread and bread products e.g. crumpets, bagels, pitta and tortilla wraps.
- Breakfast cereals e.g. Cornflakes, Cheerios, Rice Krispies, Branflakes, Fruit and Fibre.
- Cakes and biscuits.
- Cheese (only have small quantities of hard cheeses – up to 2-4oz per week)
- Crisps, corn and potato snacks.
- Condiments e.g. tomato ketchup, salad cream, mayonnaise, brown sauce, ready-made mustard, chutney, relish.
- Filled pasta, tinned pasta.
- Pasta sauces.
- Pastries – both sweet and savoury.
- Pizza.
- Potato products e.g. chips (if salt added), instant mash, potato croquettes.
- Ready meals.
- Soups – tinned and fresh.
- Sandwiches.
- Sausages and burgers.

## Low salt food choices

Choosing fresh unprocessed foods and cooking from scratch, where possible, is ideal. The following foods can be included within a healthy low salt diet.

- Fresh meat e.g. beef, pork, lamb, chicken.  
This includes fresh meat that has been frozen.
- Fresh, frozen or tinned fish e.g. cod, plaice, trout, salmon, haddock.
- Eggs, pulses (tinned in unsalted water) and lentils.
- Potatoes, rice, pasta, and unsalted crackers and crispbread.
- The lowest salt cereals are Shredded Wheat, puffed wheat, Sugar Puffs, Weetabix, Porridge and Weetaflakes.
- Fruit and vegetables – fresh, frozen, juiced or tinned without salt.
- Milk and yoghurt.
- Cottage cheese, Cream cheese, Ricotta cheese, Quark.
- Herbs, spices, pepper, vinegar, garlic, mustard powder.
- Home-made soups using low salt stocks.
- Low salt yeast extract, gravy browning or stock cubes.
- Unsalted crisps and nuts.

## Reading food labels

Nutrition labels are usually found on the back or the side of food packaging. The full nutritional information is provided per 100g of the product. Sometimes they also tell you the information per serving or per pack.

Some foods now have the nutritional information displayed on the front of the packaging. This is usually given per portion, be aware that the serving on the pack may be different to the amount that you plan to eat.

Some products combine colour coding with the nutritional information. Colour coded labelling makes it easy to see at a glance if a product is high (red), medium (amber) or low (green) in certain nutrients including salt. Aim to mainly choose products where salt is coded green, have amber products occasionally and limit the number of red products.

Low salt (green)	Less than 0.3g per 100g
Medium salt (amber)	Between 0.3g and 1.5g per 100g
High salt (red)	More than 1.5g per 100g or more than 1.8g per portion

# **Fruit and vegetables**

Eating more fruit and vegetables has been shown to have a good effect on your blood pressure.

Aim to eat at least five portions of fruits and vegetables per day.

## **But what is a portion?**

- 3oz (80g) of a fruit or vegetable = one portion.
- One medium apple or pear.
- One medium banana.
- Seven strawberries.
- Two halves of canned peaches.
- Three dried apricots.
- Handful of grapes.
- One medium glass of orange juice  
(only one glass per day can be counted as a portion).
- Two satsumas or plums.
- Handful of vegetable sticks.
- Two florets of broccoli or cauliflower.
- Three heaped tablespoons of peas or sweetcorn.
- Seven cherry tomatoes.
- Cereal bowl of mixed salad.

# **Eat the right amount of protein**

Protein is used for building and repairing the body. The amount we need depends on age and our size. Most of us eat far more protein than we actually need for good health. There is some evidence to show that avoiding a very high protein intake can be beneficial in kidney disease.

Protein foods include meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products and non-animal sources such as peas, beans, nuts, seeds and lentils.

You should aim to eat protein foods at two meals each day in order to meet your nutritional requirements but should avoid large portions.

## **Sensible portion sizes for protein foods are:**

- 50g (2oz) protein food at a small meal such as two slices chicken in a sandwich
- 100-125g (4-5oz) protein food at a main meal such as a small chicken breast or fillet of fish.
- Two eggs.
- Three tablespoons beans, peas, chickpeas, lentils
- A handful unsalted nuts.

## **What about dairy?**

Dairy products like milk and cheese give your body calcium and other important vitamins but also contain protein (cheese is also high in salt). Keep to a maximum of two to three portions of dairy foods each day. Go for lower fat and lower sugar products where possible.

### **Sensible portion sizes for dairy are:**

- 200mls (third of a pint) milk for drinks and cereals
  - If using plant milk (soya, nut, rice, oat) choose unfortified, unsweetened versions
- One small pot yoghurt (125g) or three tablespoons
- 25g cheese (1oz) for example a matchbox size
- One tablespoon cream cheese
- Three tablespoons cottage cheese

# Alcohol

- Both men and women are advised to avoid exceeding 14 units of alcohol per week, to keep associated health risks to a low level.
- If you do drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread this evenly over three days or more.
- If you wish to cut down the amount you're drinking, a good way to help achieve this is to have several alcohol free days each week.

## How many units do drinks contain?

- 125ml of 12% wine = 1.5 units
- 175ml of 12% wine = 2 units
- 250ml of 12% wine = 3 units
- Pint of lower strength lager, beer or cider (3.6%) = 2 units
- Pint of stronger lager, beer or cider (5.2%) = 3 units
- Can of lager, beer or cider (440ml 5%) = 2 units
- Single measure or 25ml of spirit (40%) = 1 unit

Please note: drinks with higher % alcohol will contain more units of alcohol.



# **Changing the type and amounts of fats in your diet**

Reducing the overall amount of fat can help you to lose weight. However, changing the type of fat in your diet can help to look after your heart and blood vessels.

It is important to reduce the overall amount of fat you eat but also to replace some of the saturated fat with polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fat.

## **Saturated fats**

The higher your intake of saturated fat the higher your cholesterol is likely to be, which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Saturated fats come mainly from animal sources, such as fatty meats, and are also included in butter, cheese, pastry, cakes and biscuits.

## **Polyunsaturated fats**

Polyunsaturated fats are found in vegetable oil products (i.e. sunflower, safflower, soya and corn).

## **Monounsaturated fats**

Monounsaturated fats are found in olive based products, rapeseed oil, avocado, nuts and seeds.

## **Increase the amount of omega 3 fatty acids in your diet**

Increasing the amount of omega 3 fatty acids in your diet has been found to help reduce your blood pressure.

### **Where can Omega 3 fatty acids be found?**

- Oily fish – low salt sources are herring, mackerel, pilchards, salmon, sardines, fresh tuna or trout.
- Rapeseed oil (canola oil).

### **How much Omega 3 do I need to eat?**

- Aim for one serving of oily fish and one serving of white fish per week.
- A serving is roughly 100g (4oz) of fresh or frozen fish or one small or half a medium or a third of a large tin of canned fish.

## **What if you have a poor appetite or need to make a lot of changes to your diet?**

It is always important to maintain a good nutritional intake and to stay well nourished. If you need to make changes to your diet but have a poor appetite, or if you currently eat a lot of processed foods or ready meals, you could find it difficult to make some of the changes outlined in this booklet.

Please ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian if you need more help and information.

## What about exercise?

Exercise has been shown to bring specific benefits to people with kidney disease, as well as general improvements to health. These benefits include:

- improved cardiovascular fitness
- improved endurance
- improved muscle strength
- better quality of life
- reduced feelings of depression.

Exercise may seem daunting but there are many ways of increasing activity that can be enjoyable. Remember that exercising can make you feel out of breath, increase your heart rate and make you feel sweaty – this is normal! Maybe try starting by taking a brisk walk, doing some gardening or vigorous housework. You should aim to build up the amount of activity gradually, ideally aiming for 20-30 minutes a day on at least three to four days per week.

Please speak to your GP or kidney team members if you are interested in starting an activity or exercise programme. Exercise groups for people with kidney disease take place regularly at York Hospital – if you would like more information on these please contact the kidney physiotherapist on 07866 206206 during office hours. You can leave a message on this phone if needed. Or you can find out more and get practical advice on exercising with kidney disease from the UK Kidney Research website or Kidney Care UK website.

## **Additional resources and useful websites**

The following resources are available from the dietitians for further information:

- Managing your phosphate
- Managing your potassium levels
- How to follow your fluid allowance
- Eating well with a poor appetite
- Eating well with progressive kidney disease
- Managing the nutritional symptoms of chronic kidney disease

### **Useful websites:**

#### **NHS Choices (Lose weight-Better health)**

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/>

This provides links to the free NHS Weight Loss Plan as well as other free weight loss plans and programmes.

#### **Kidney Beam**

<https://beamfeelgood.com/kidney-disease>

This is a web-based exercise resource available free of charge, which helps people living with kidney disease feel good through movement, education and wellbeing support. You can access exercise sessions and advice from experts using your electronic devices at home or away.

## **Kidney Kitchen**

<https://kidneycareuk.org/get-support/healthy-diet-support/kidney-kitchen/>

This website provides kidney-friendly recipes that can be enjoyed every day and at every stage of kidney disease. It has been developed by kidney dietitians and food experts in the UK and the recipes have been carefully analysed and approved by the British Dietetic Association Renal Nutrition Specialist Group (RNG).

## **Kidney Care UK**

<https://kidneycareuk.org/get-support/healthy-diet-support/>

As well as Kidney Kitchen also see the healthy diet support section of the Kidney Care UK website for information relating to eating well with kidney disease, flavouring foods without using salt, potassium and phosphate.

Also see for information on exercise and being active.

## **British Dietetic Association**

<https://www.bda.uk.com/food-health.html>

See food fact sheets developed by the British Dietetic Association including healthy eating, salt, blood pressure management, type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

The Nutrition and Dietetics Department on telephone 01904 725269 or email: [yhs-tr.yorkdietitians@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.yorkdietitians@nhs.net)

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

Owner	Department of Nutrition and Dietetics
Date first issued	March 2010
Review Date	December 2027
Version	5 (issued February 2025)
Approved by	Advanced Clinical Specialist Dietitian and Renal Development Meeting
Document Reference	PIL446 v5
© 2025 York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.	
All Rights reserved.	