



Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

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How do I know how much sodium or potassium is in a food?

Q: How do I know how much sodium or potassium is in a food?

A: Salt, or sodium chloride, is the main way we get sodium in our foods. Too much sodium makes you thirsty and can raise your blood pressure. Potassium is found mainly in fruits and vegetables. Too much potassium can make your heart stop. Finding out how much sodium and potassium is in food is one key to staying healthy on dialysis.

It's easy to find out how much sodium is in a food. U.S. food laws require sodium to be listed on food packages. Your dietitian can tell you how much sodium you can have in a day.

Finding potassium levels in food is harder. Food laws do not require potassium to be listed on food labels. Sometimes it's listed and sometimes it's not.

Your dietitian may have lists of the amount of potassium in foods. A food guide like *Bowes & Church's Food Values of Portions Commonly Used* by Jean A. T. Pennington, PhD. Pennington will tell you how much potassium is in most foods. Libraries may have this book or you can buy it.

You can also search the USDA National Nutrient Database on the Internet at www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/cgi-bin/nut_search.pl for the foods you like.

What I can do to learn about sodium and potassium in foods:

- Ask my dietitian to give me a list of the potassium content of foods, or to look up my favorite foods.
- Get in the habit of reading food labels.
- Know my daily allowances for sodium and potassium.
- Look for books or other information on potassium levels in foods I like.
- Visit module 9 of Kidney School™: *Nutrition and Fluids* at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more.