

# Kidney disease and diet

How can a dietitian help me?



**Information for patients**

Sheffield Dietetics



**PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

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## **What is a dietitian?**

A dietitian is a health care professional who helps promote nutritional well-being and prevents nutrition-related problems by giving advice on food choices. Dietitians have a science-based degree and work within the NHS. Dietitians that help people with kidney disease are called renal dietitians.

Food, drink and lifestyle choices are very important in people with kidney disease and dietitians can help you get the best out of your treatment.

## **How can a renal dietitian help me?**

Changes to your diet can help in the treatment of kidney disease and any complications. A renal dietitian can give you food-related advice that suits your individual lifestyle and medical condition. There will be different advice depending on the stage of the disease, treatment and your blood results.

## **What will happen if I see a renal dietitian?**

If you see a renal dietitian, they will ask about the types and amounts of food and drinks you have and look at your blood test results. Together, you can discuss any changes which would benefit your medical problems and lifestyle.

You can still enjoy a healthy diet and a wide variety of foods with kidney disease.

# What dietary advice may be helpful for people with kidney disease?

## Salt

Adults should eat no more than 6g of salt per day, this is about 1 teaspoon. Most adults in the UK eat more than this. Too much salt in the diet can lead to high blood pressure, which can damage your heart and kidneys. Most of the salt in our diet is hidden in the foods we buy. You can use the information below to help you choose foods lower in salt. When looking at food labels, try to choose foods that have low or medium amounts of salt, these will be green or amber on the coloured food label :

- Foods are low in salt if they have less than 0.3g of salt per 100g.
- Foods are high in salt if they have more than 1.5g of salt per 100g.



A dietitian can advise you on other ways to reduce the salt in your diet.

## Fluid

When the kidneys are not working properly, they are less able to make urine. If you are not passing as much urine as you used to fluid may build up in the body. This can make you feel unwell and can increase your blood pressure. If you have too much fluid in your body, you may need to reduce your fluid intake. A dietitian can provide you with advice on how to restrict your fluid intake if you need to.

**Do not restrict your fluid intake unless your doctor, nurse or dietitian has told you to do so.**

## Phosphate and Potassium

Phosphate and potassium are minerals which are found in a lot of foods and are needed by the body to keep our bones, heart and muscles healthy.

Your kidneys normally control your phosphate and potassium blood levels, but when the kidneys are damaged they can become less able to do this. This can cause your phosphate and/or potassium blood levels to rise. These levels will be closely monitored by doctors, dietitians and other healthcare professionals who will help you to keep them within safe limits.

A dietitian can help to keep these levels within safe limits by advising you on which foods to eat and how to prepare them.

## **Poor appetite**

When the kidneys are not working properly, you can feel unwell, experience taste changes and a reduced appetite.

A renal dietitian can suggest ways to improve your food intake if your appetite is poor. If you have lost any weight without meaning to, or are struggling to eat as much as you usually would, a dietitian can provide you with advice to help with this.

## **Reducing your weight**

Being overweight or obese can lead to many health problems. Losing just 5% of your body weight if you are overweight can improve blood pressure control and reduce the risk of developing other conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

A dietitian can advise you on the best ways to reduce your weight through diet and lifestyle choices.

Leaflets are available on these topics if you need them. Ask your doctor, nurse or dietitian if you would like one.

## **Do I need to change my diet?**

You should not make any changes to your food or drinks unless you have been told to by a dietitian, nurse or doctor.

Dietary advice will be different for everyone so it is important that you do not change your diet because someone else has. Everyone has different needs, even if they have the same medical problem, so it is important that you only follow advice which has been given to you personally.

If you have any concerns you can contact the renal dietitians for more information.

If you are advised to change your food or drinks this will be checked over time to make sure it is still right for you.

## **How can I get a referral to a dietitian?**

You can ask your doctor, nurse or support worker to refer you to a dietitian.

Alternatively, you can refer yourself to a dietitian using the dietetic department telephone number:

**0114 271 4162**

## **Where can I find out more about kidney disease?**

- [www.kidney.org.uk](http://www.kidney.org.uk)
- [www.renal.org](http://www.renal.org)
- [www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk](http://www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk)



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