



# NAVIGATING THE FOOD BANK

## For the Kidney Diet

Nearly 1.1 Million<sup>i</sup> Canadians are assisted by food banks every month. Food banks are charitable organizations that store and distribute food, and since they rely on donations, the food available is not always suitable for special diets.

Food plays an important role in managing kidney disease. There is no standard kidney diet, but controlling the amount of certain nutrients, including sodium, phosphorus and potassium, can prevent complications. Sometimes it is difficult to combine the kidney diet with other recommendations. See your Registered Dietitian for guidance.

Choose	Limit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain pasta or rice</li> <li>• White bread</li> <li>• Whole wheat or whole grain bread (to be consumed in moderation and within recommendations from your renal dietitian.</li> <li>• Potatoes, fresh or canned (double-boil) *see cooking method below</li> <li>• Corn or rice cereals</li> <li>• Frozen meats and fish</li> <li>• Eggs</li> <li>• Peanut butter</li> <li>• Canned tuna or salmon (remove bones)</li> <li>• Cheese</li> <li>• Milk (regular or powdered)</li> <li>• Vegetables (Best to choose canned with no salt added, if not, rinse before use.)</li> <li>• Beans and legumes* see cooking method below</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kraft Dinner and packaged side dishes</li> <li>• Instant potatoes</li> <li>• Processed cheese slices and spreads</li> <li>• Packaged or canned puddings</li> <li>• Canned goods (beans, soups, stews)</li> </ul>

## Food Bank Tips

When you need to use a food bank you are not always able to make the perfect choice, but you can make the best choice. Try these tips!

- When selecting canned goods, aim for less than 10% daily value of sodium.
- Avoid foods with phosphate additives. Suspect processed and powdered products. Read the ingredients list and avoid products containing “phosphate”, “phosphoric” or “phos” in the list.
- After visiting the food bank, plan your meals and snacks to ensure you eat well and save money.
- Prepare food in batches and use leftovers for a meal the following day or freeze for a day when your energy is low.
- Only cook vegetables you will need and add leftovers to soups or casseroles.
- Use leftover meat or chicken bones to make soup.
- Grow your own herbs such as rosemary and thyme to add flavour to your food or, if you have space, grow your own vegetables, such as lettuce, cucumbers and zucchini.
- If you can, choose lower potassium fruits and vegetables such as apples, berries, pineapple, broccoli, cauliflower and corn.
- Contact your food bank to find out if they have a “kidney friendly” program.

## Other Resources

Talk to your dialysis unit Social Worker or local Public Health Department to learn about other services in your community like:

- Food Buying Clubs
- Student Nutrition Programs
- Meal Programs
- Community Gardens
- Community Kitchens
- Good Food Box

For a food bank location near you, go to: <http://www.foodbankscanada.ca>

For information on the kidney diet, go to: [www.kidneycommunitykitchen.ca](http://www.kidneycommunitykitchen.ca)

## Cooking Methods

Cooking methods can affect the potassium content in some foods. Double-boiling, or leaching is a process by which some potassium can be pulled out of the vegetable.

### How to double-boil vegetables:

Boiling vegetables twice is considered the best way to remove the most potassium from root vegetables such as potatoes and sweet potatoes. This process does not turn these vegetables into a low potassium food. It does allow you to include these foods safely into your diet, in moderation.

#### **For Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes, Carrots, Beets, Winter Squash, and Rutabagas:**

- Wash and peel the vegetable.
- Dice or thinly slice the vegetable.
- Place the vegetable in room temperature water. Use two times the amount of water to the amount of vegetable.
- Bring the water to a boil.
- Drain off the water and add fresh, room temperature water. Use two times the amount of water to the amount of vegetable.
- Bring the water to a boil again and cook until the vegetable is soft and tender.
- Drain and discard the boiling water.

### How to reduce Potassium in Legumes

Traditionally, patients with a kidney disease have been advised against eating legumes. Legumes, in addition to vitamins and fibers, contain a lot of protein and minerals. Emerging research shows that phosphorous and potassium from plant-based foods such as beans, lentils, nuts and whole grains is poorly absorbed. The amount of potassium in plant-based foods can vary. For example, tofu and chickpeas are lower in potassium than soybeans and white beans. <sup>ii</sup>

Fortunately, a recent study has found a way for chronic kidney disease patients to safely enjoy legumes (Martínez-Pineda, 2019<sup>1</sup>).

You can reduce the potassium in dried beans and legumes by more than 80% by following these 3 easy steps:

---

<sup>1</sup> Martínez-Pineda, Montserrat, et al. "Cooking Legumes: A Way for Their Inclusion in the Renal Patient Diet." *Journal of Renal Nutrition* 29.2 (2019): 118-125.

1. Let the legumes soak in a bowl of water for 12 hours or more (do it before bedtime!)
2. Then, get rid of the soaking water (now full of potassium and sodium), and rinse the legumes
3. Cook them in a pressure cooker or boil in lots of fresh water

Cooking the legumes effectively gets rid of most of the potassium they contain. If you want a simpler and faster method for preparing low potassium and low phosphorus chickpeas and lentils, choose them canned! You only need to rinse out the salt and you are good to go.

The material contained on this fact sheet does not constitute medical advice and is intended for informational purposes only. No one associated with The Kidney Foundation of Canada will answer medical questions via email. Please consult a health care professional for specific treatment recommendations.

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://hungercount.foodbankscanada.ca/>