

NUTRITION

FACT SHEET

Add Potassium to Help Lower Blood Pressure

As you try to make healthy choices, you may often find yourself decreasing certain types of foods. Good news! With potassium—the healthy choice is to add MORE to your diet. Research shows that diets higher in potassium can help to lower blood pressure.

Are We Eating Enough Potassium?

Americans are not getting enough potassium in their diet. In fact, Americans are typically consuming only half the level of potassium that is recommended.

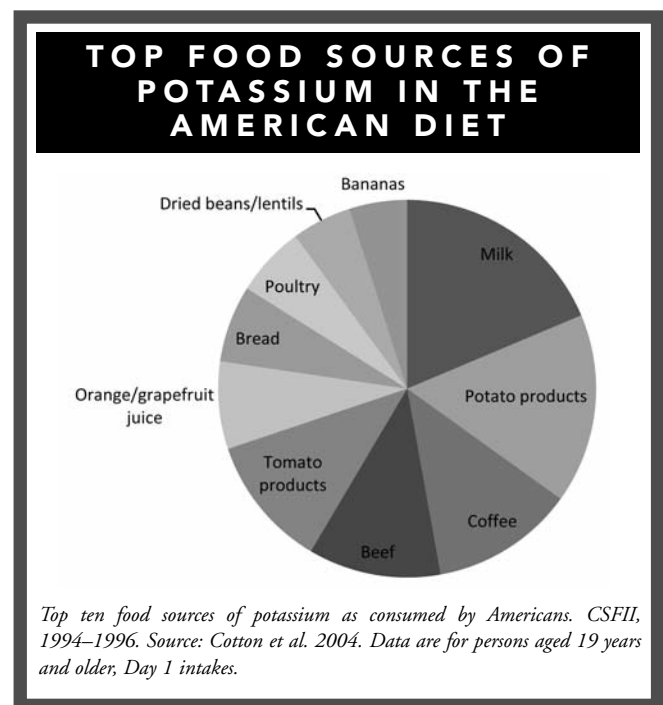
How Much Potassium Do We Need?

The *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend consuming 4,700 mg of potassium everyday. By including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat milk products as the *Dietary Guidelines* recommend, you can get enough potassium in your diet. However, research shows many Americans are not consuming enough of these foods. Less than one third of Americans are consuming the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and only about half are meeting their needs for low-fat milk products.

The recommended daily potassium intake for adults is 4,700 mg. The average intake for women is 2200–2400 mg. and for men 2800–3300 mg.

Where Are We Getting Our Potassium?

Not only are Americans not getting enough potassium, the potassium they are getting is not coming from the best sources. Healthy foods that are potassium rich, like fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy and whole grain cereals should be topping the list; but this is not the case. Many people get more of their potassium from coffee than bananas. And while popular sources, like dairy, potatoes and beef have potassium, many Americans go for the high fat



choices. Healthier options are low-fat, low calorie or lean choices of these foods.

Why Do We Need More Potassium?

Studies show that potassium can significantly lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of stroke. This is important because high blood pressure, also called hypertension, affects nearly one in three American adults, or about 72 million men and women. Nearly 70 million more adults are at risk of developing high

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To find heart healthy foods that are a good source of potassium and are low in sodium, saturated fat and cholesterol look for this FDA health claim on food products, “Diets containing foods that are good sources of potassium and low in sodium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure and stroke.”

blood pressure (pre-hypertension) and nine in every 10 people will probably develop high blood pressure by the time they reach their mid-60s.

Potassium Helps to Lower Blood Pressure

Over 25 intervention studies concluded that blood pressure was reduced in individuals who had a high intake of potassium. Three research meta-analyses of the effect of potassium on blood pressure found significant decreases in blood pressure with high consumption of potassium. In addition, a diet high in potassium has been linked to a decreased risk of stroke in people with normal and high blood pressure. In a study of over ten thousand men and women from 52 sites around the world, those eating diets relatively high in potassium had lower blood pressure.

Potassium in the Diet

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy has been scientifically demonstrated to lower blood pressure. The DASH eating pattern is rich in potassium and many other nutrients such as magnesium, calcium, protein and fiber, and is low in total fat, saturated fat and

cholesterol. The follow-up study of DASH showed a significant decrease in blood pressure beyond the effects of sodium restriction alone. The DASH eating plan is recommended in the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Add Potassium!

At every meal, try to add some tasty and healthful potassium foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. You may even find that your meals will be lower in calories, saturated fat, and sodium without any additional effort. Here are some ideas to get started:

IDEAS FOR A POTASSIUM-RICH DAY

| Meal | Try... |
|---------------|--|
| Breakfast | 1 cup oatmeal, 1 medium banana, 8 oz. fat-free milk |
| Lunch | 2 oz. turkey, 1 ½ oz. low fat Swiss cheese, lettuce and sliced tomato, 2 slices whole wheat bread, 6 baby carrots, 1 cup cubed cantaloupe |
| Snack | ¾ cup low-fat granola with ¼ cup dried apricots, 6 oz. orange juice |
| Dinner | 4 oz. salmon, 1 large baked potato, 6 steamed asparagus spears, 1 cup spinach salad with oil & vinegar dressing, whole grain dinner roll, 1 teaspoon reduced-calorie tub margarine |
| Snack | 3 oz. fruit blend with a good source of potassium, and ½ cup sliced strawberries |
| Totals | 1970 calories, 44 g total fat, 9 g saturated fat, 2390 mg sodium, 5065 mg potassium |

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