

## Potassium: “The Sodium Antidote”

Potassium isn't a household name, but it really ought to be. Potassium helps neutralize sodium's effect on blood pressure. It also seems to lower risk of stroke, and helps prevent kidney stones and bone loss that can lead to osteoporosis.

### Other health benefits

#### Osteoporosis

High dietary intake of potassium helps to preserve bone mass thereby preventing bone loss that can lead to osteoporosis.

#### Asthma

Several studies have suggested that diets low in potassium are associated with poor lung function and even asthma in children compared to those who eat normal amounts of potassium.

#### Stroke

A diet rich in potassium has been associated with a reduced risk of stroke, independent of its effect on reducing blood pressure.

#### Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

Amongst other nutrient deficiencies, people with IBD (namely, ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease) often have low levels of potassium.

### How much potassium do we need?

Unfortunately, we just aren't getting enough potassium. The average adult needs 4700mg of potassium a day. The typical Canadian man gets roughly 3300mg/day; and the average woman gets only 2500mg.

For most people, a healthy diet rich in potassium-rich fruits and vegetables provides all of your potassium needs. *CAUTION: Talk to your health care provider before taking potassium supplements.*

### Dietary Sources (HIGH potassium food sources):

All meats, poultry and fish	Milk
Apricots (fresh more than canned)	Oranges and orange juice
Avocado	Potatoes
Banana	Prunes
Cantaloupe	Spinach
Honeydew	Tomatoes
Kiwi	Vegetable juice
Lima beans	Winter squash

Potassium losses from cooking of high-potassium foods can be significant. In the case of spinach for example, boiling spinach results in a 56% loss of potassium, versus raw.

To maximize the amount of potassium from these foods, try baking, roasting or steaming when cooking vegetables. Avoid boiling as potassium leaches out into the water during cooking.

### 4 ways to increase the potassium in your diet:

1. Become familiar with those foods high in potassium - most foods, being fresh, won't have food labels.
2. Aim for 7-8 servings of fruit & vegetables each day.
3. Choose fruits and vegetables that are higher in potassium E.g. baked yam over potato; fresh tuna over canned.
4. Include at least 5 high potassium foods in your diet every day, E.g. a banana a day.