

Potassium Content of Foods and Salt Substitutes

Patients who take potassium-wasting diuretics (loops, thiazides) are often counseled to increase potassium intake to help prevent hypokalemia. For patients with uncomplicated hypertension, an extra 20 mEq to 40 mEq potassium/day is usually sufficient to prevent potassium loss. This increase in potassium can easily be achieved through dietary sources. Typically, leafy green vegetables, fruit from vines, and root vegetables are good dietary sources of potassium. It's been shown that a low-sodium diet that's high in potassium (like the "DASH diet") can help lower blood pressure by as much as 8 to 10 mm Hg.¹ A daily dietary potassium intake of 4.7 g/day (120 mEq/day or 120 mmol/day) or more is safe for healthy people, since excess potassium is excreted in the urine. On the other hand, patients with renal dysfunction (CrCl < 60 mL/min), adrenal insufficiency, the elderly, and those taking medications like ACE inhibitors, ARBs, NSAIDs, or potassium-sparing diuretics (spironolactone, triamterene) may be prone to hyperkalemia and should be mindful of high potassium intake. These folks should receive < 4.7 g/day (120 mEq/day or 120 mmol/day) of potassium.² It's important to note that dietary potassium should NOT be used to correct hypokalemia. Most potassium in foods comes as the phosphate salt, and not the chloride salt. Because of this, dietary potassium is not effective in correcting chloride depletion which can be caused by diuretics, vomiting, and nasogastric drainage.² This document includes a helpful table that lists commonly consumed potassium-rich foods and salt substitutes.

To calculate mEq and mmol of potassium from mg of potassium, use $39 \text{ mg } K^+ = 1 \text{ mEq } K^+ = 1 \text{ mmol } K^+$ ^{7,8}

Food	Elemental Potassium Content ^{1,3-6}	
	Milligrams (mg)	Milliequivalents (mEq) = Millimoles (mmol)
Dairy (serving size is 8 oz = 1 cup = 240 mL, unless otherwise indicated)		
Milk, skim, whole, or buttermilk	350	9
Yogurt, low fat, plain	531	14
Fruits		
Apricots, 5 dried	480	12
Avocado (1/4)	300	7-10
Banana (medium)	451	12
Cantaloupe (1/4)	412	11
Kiwi	252	6
Nectarine	288	7
Orange	300	7
Papaya (1/4)	390	10
Peach	305	8
Prunes, 5 dried	365	9
Raisins (1/2 cup = 4 oz = 120 gm)	553	14
Watermelon (1/16)	560	14

More . . .

Food	Elemental Potassium Content ^{1,3-6}	
	Milligrams (mg)	Milliequivalents (mEq) = Millimoles (mmol)
Juices (serving size is 4 oz = ½ cup = 120 mL)		
Apple juice	148	4
Grapefruit juice	210	6
Orange juice, frozen	252	7
Pineapple juice	148	4
Prune juice	301	8
Tomato juice, low sodium	225	6
Nuts		
Almonds, dry roasted (1 oz or 30 gm)	210	5
Salt substitutes (serving size is 1/4 tsp) (contain potassium chloride)		
<i>AlsoSalt</i>	356	10
<i>Morton Salt Substitute, NoSalt, Nu-Salt</i>	610-795	15-20
Vegetables (serving size is 8 oz = 1 cup = 240 mL, unless otherwise indicated)		
Acorn squash, cooked	896	23
Beets	530	13
Broccoli, frozen, cooked	332	9
Brussel sprouts, cooked	494	13
Butternut squash, cooked	583	15
Collards, frozen, cooked	427	11
Kidney beans, cooked	713	18
Lentils, cooked	731	19
Lettuce, 1 head Boston	419	10
Lima beans, frozen, cooked	700	18
Mushrooms	550	14
Pinto beans, cooked	800	20
Potato, baked with skin	844	21
Potato without skin	600	15
Pumpkin, canned	506	12
Soybeans, cooked	972	24
Spinach, raw, cooked	838	21
Split peas, cooked	710	18
Sweet potato, baked with skin	350	9
Tomato	251-273	7
White navy beans, cooked	669	18
Zucchini, cooked, sliced	456	12

Users of this document are cautioned to use their own professional judgment and consult any other necessary or appropriate sources prior to making clinical judgments based on the content of this document. Our editors have researched the information with input from experts, government agencies, and national organizations. Information and Internet links in this article were current as of the date of publication.

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