MARCH 2026

myrenalnutrition.com

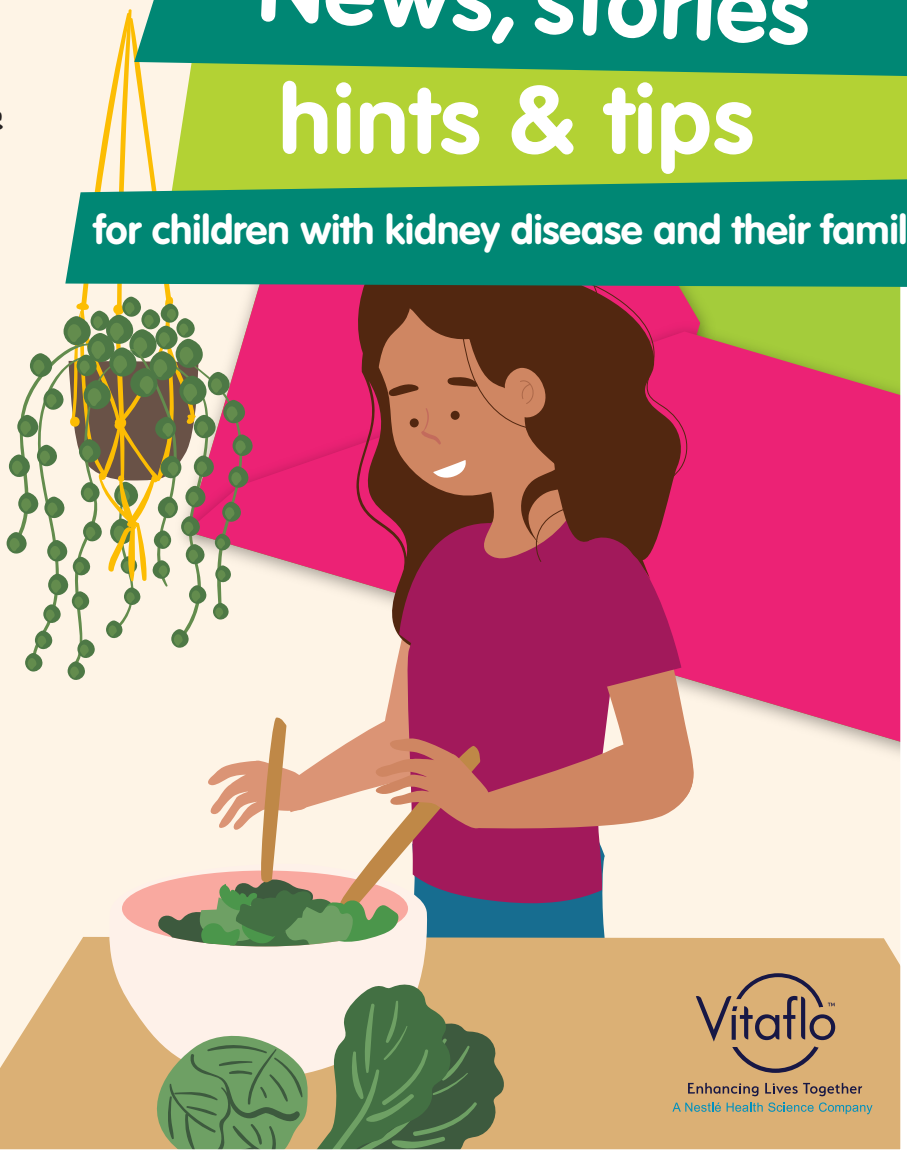
A focus on reducing additives

NEWSLETTER

WHAT'S INSIDE...

News, stories hints & tips

for children with kidney disease and their families



Vitaflo™
Enhancing Lives Together
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My Renal Nutrition NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the March 2026 edition of the My Renal Nutrition newsletter - a newsletter devised by Vitaflo™ for children with kidney disease and their family, with content written by individuals who have personal experiences of living with kidney disease as well as healthcare professionals who work alongside patients with this condition.

This edition of the newsletter focuses on how to reduce your intake of potassium and phosphate additives. We have also included a recipe idea and a fun activity idea.

If you have a story to share or even a great recipe idea, please let your dietitian know and we can be sure to include it in future newsletters.

Yours sincerely

The team at Vitaflo

myrenalnutrition.com

WHAT'S INSIDE...

READING FOOD LABELS

to reduce your intake of potassium and phosphate additives

If you want to know what's in your food and drinks, just check the label!

There is a lot of helpful information on food labels, but the secret to choosing a diet that is kidney-friendly is knowing what this information means. Your doctor or kidney dietitian may advise you to limit meals high in phosphate and potassium, regardless of the stage of your kidney disease; but how do you do this? Lets look into this further together.

WHAT ARE PHOSPHATE AND POTASSIUM?

When you have kidney disease, you may need to limit the amount of phosphate and potassium that you eat.

Foods derived from plants and animals may include the mineral **phosphate**. Phosphate is essential for delivering energy to every cell in your body, and our bones use the majority of the phosphate we eat.

Similarly, meals derived from plants and animals may include the mineral **potassium**. Did you know that your muscles and nerves need potassium to work? In particular, your heart needs potassium to contract and pump blood around your body. It plays a big role in controlling fluid balance in cells.

PHOSPHATE AND POTASSIUM COME IN DIFFERENT FORMS

Plant-based foods like vegetables, fruits, wholegrains, seeds, beans, nuts, and cereal, as well as animal-based meals like meat, poultry, fish, and dairy products, naturally contain phosphate and potassium.

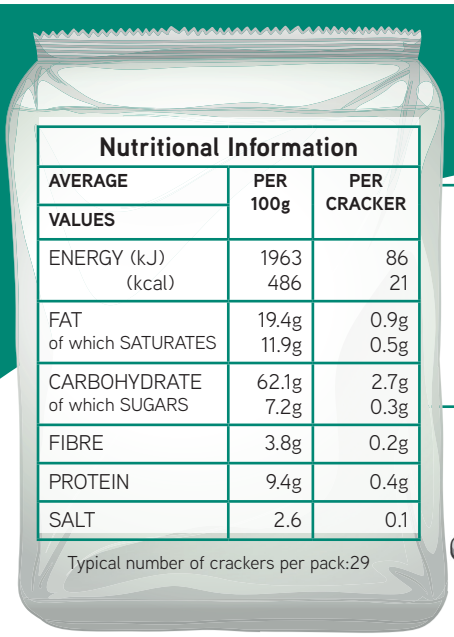
However, during the preparation or processing of the ingredients used to create "ultra processed foods" (UPFs), manufacturers also add potassium and phosphate additives to food, we will call them '**unnatural**' phosphate and potassium. These potassium and phosphate "additives" can cause problems – I will tell you why very soon.

Plant-based meals like beans and leafy greens **naturally** contain potassium and phosphate, which are stored in tiny fibre sacks. Our bodies have a hard time getting to these fibre sacks, and we can only get 20–50% of the phosphate and potassium they contain.

Even though meat, fish, and dairy products that **naturally** contain phosphate and potassium don't include fibre, they do need to be zapped by special stomach juices, which gradually release the phosphate and potassium for the body to use.

Here's why these **unnatural** phosphate and potassium additives may be problematic. Since they don't hide in fibre pockets or need a zap attack by your stomach juices, your body can use them at any time without restriction. Although that may seem like wonderful news, these phosphate and potassium additives can lead to serious issues if they build up to dangerously high levels in our blood.

WHAT DOES THE FOOD LABEL TELL ME?



Nutritional Information		
AVERAGE VALUES	PER 100g	PER CRACKER
ENERGY (kJ) (kcal)	1963 486	86 21
FAT of which SATURATES	19.4g 11.9g	0.9g 0.5g
CARBOHYDRATE of which SUGARS	62.1g 7.2g	2.7g 0.3g
FIBRE	3.8g	0.2g
PROTEIN	9.4g	0.4g
SALT	2.6	0.1

Typical number of crackers per pack:29

Nutrition Information Table

Phosphate and potassium additives will not be listed in the **Nutrition Information** table, so be sure to check the ingredient list.

Ingredient

Look for phosphate and potassium additives in the ingredient list

Phosphate additives

Look for the word phosphate or any ingredients that include 'phos' in the name. This suggests a phosphate additive has been used. Choose a different product without **'phos'.**

INGREDIENTS: Pork (98%), Mineral Sea Salt, Brown Sugar, Stabilisers (**Potassium** Tri**phosphate**, Sodium Tri**phosphate**, Tetra**potassium** Di**phosphate**), Antioxidant (Sodium Ascorbate), Preservative (Sodium Nitrate).

Potassium additives

Check for any ingredients that includes 'potassium' in the name. This suggests a potassium additive has been used.

Low-salt products

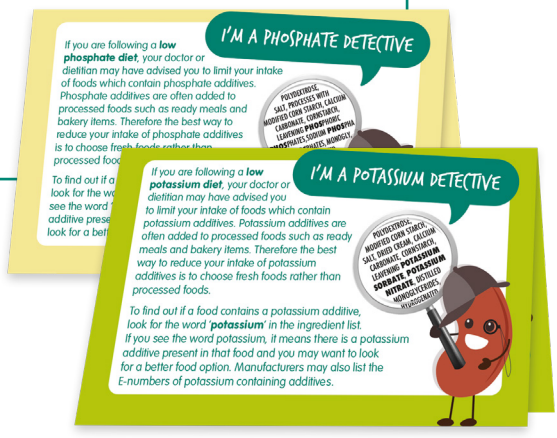
Sometimes, low-sodium or low-salt products e.g. canned soups may contain potassium chloride salt instead of sodium chloride. This isn't good if you need to follow a low potassium diet. Therefore avoid salt substitutes, and use herbs and spices to flavour your food instead.

E numbers

Some additives will be listed by their E-number rather than their name.

Remember to carry your handy potassium and phosphate **detective card with you.**

INGREDIENTS: Emulsifying Salts (E331, E452, E450)



GREATEST FIRST

The ingredients are listed according to their quantity in the food or drink. On the above label from a packet of ham, pork is listed as the main ingredient, followed by sea salt.

NOT ALL FOODS HAVE A LABEL!

Whether it comes in a bottle, can, jar, bag, or box, the majority of packaged food and beverages we eat, and drink have labels. But not every food has a label. For instance, natural sources of potassium or phosphate may still be present in fresh vegetables, fruit, poultry, fish and eggs, even if they are not labelled. Your dietitian will advise how much of these foods are recommended to support your kidney-friendly diet.

LIMITING FOOD ADDITIVES

by Aphria

Aphria was diagnosed with congenital nephrotic syndrome at one year of age. Congenital nephrotic syndrome is a kidney condition that begins in infancy and typically leads to irreversible kidney failure by early childhood. Both her kidneys were removed at 18 months old, and she was on dialysis until receiving a kidney from her dad.

The kidney began failing when she was 17 years old, and after being on dialysis again, Aphria has just received her second successful kidney transplant.

Additives are found in many foods. If you have kidney disease and are following dietary restrictions, it's important to be able to recognise which foods are suitable and which you should limit. Below I've shared some of the ways that I manage my intake of potassium and phosphate additives:

HOME PREP COOKING IS THE BEST

Cooking meals from scratch, rather than buying pre-prepared from the shops, gives you the best chance of avoiding or limiting food additives. Snack or treat foods, such as cakes, sweets or crisps tend to have higher levels of potassium and phosphate additives due to their long-shelf life. However, even single ingredients such as meats (think sliced ham) may also be processed, so always worth a label-check!

To make this process less overwhelming over time, be sure to make note of key recipes that work for you so you have your go to meals. You can also batch cook more than you need and freeze some for future meals.

MEDICATION AND TREATMENT MANAGEMENT

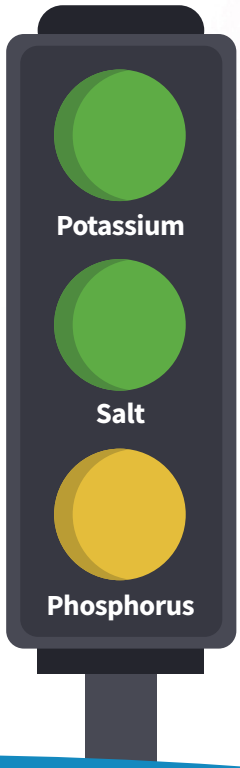
If you are struggling to manage your intake of potassium and phosphate despite any recommended lifestyle changes, you can talk to your treating team about medications such as potassium or phosphate binders. If you are on dialysis, talk to your treating team about what dialysate is being used – they may able to make some changes to help you manage better. High levels of potassium and phosphate increase strain on the heart and body, particularly for those with end-stage kidney disease, so its really important to ask for help when you need it.

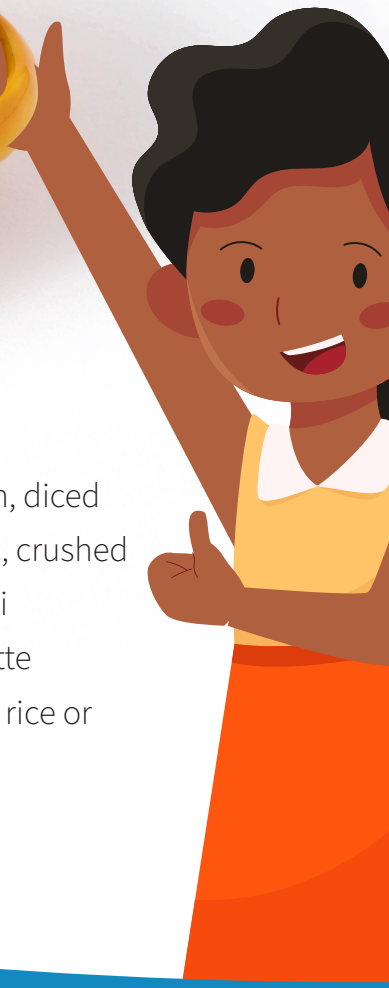
FOOD LABELS

- **Check food labels** and look out for. **E numbers**, or words with **'Phos'** or **potassium** in the name.
- **To manage salt**, check for ingredients listed as "sodium" comes in various forms, and be aware that salt alternatives can be higher in potassium, as sodium chloride is often replaced with potassium chloride. So always check the labels.
- **Shop around -** alternative brands may have lower levels of additives which are more suitable.
- **Commonly-used potassium additives include** Potassium phosphates (E340) and potassium chloride (E508).
- **Commonly used phosphate additives** include E338 to E343 and E450 to E452. Phosphate additives ('Phos') are often used to extend the shelf life of food.
- Once you find a food item that works for you and you enjoy, be sure to make a note of it on a **'key items'** shopping list for you to refer to – this could be on your phone. This minimises the need for constant label checking. **Remember to double-check the label every now and again in case of product ingredient changes.**
- Your renal dietitian might have access to some **useful resources** to help you remember what key additives to look out for so don't hesitate to ask!
- **Reading food labels** and becoming familiar with additives is also a good way of tracking and reducing your consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPF's)!

Vegetable Risotto

Serves **4**





Ingredients

160g Frozen peas
2 tbsp fresh parsley
Pinch ground pepper
4 tbsp olive oil
75g parmesan, finely grated
1 cube reduced salt vegetable stock
1 small onion, diced
1 clove garlic, crushed
100g Broccoli
100g Courgette
350g Arborio rice or risotto rice

Method

1. **If using peas:** Put the peas into a pan of water and boil for 5 minutes, then drain.

   If using broccoli: Remove the chunky stem and discard. Chop the florets evenly and boil in a pan of water for 5 minutes and drain.

   If using courgette: Cut the ends off the courgette and throw them away. Slice the courgette, boil in a pan of water for 5 minutes and drain.
2. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and add the onion and garlic, cook over a medium heat for 5 minutes, or until the onion is soft.
3. Take the pan off the heat and add the rice, stirring until the rice is coated with the oil.
4. In a jug, add 850ml boiling water to the stock cube and stir until dissolved.
5. Using a ladle, add one scoop of the stock to the rice mixture, and put back on the heat. Gently stir the rice until nearly all the liquid has been absorbed. Each time the stock is absorbed, add another ladleful.
6. About 15 minutes after you added the first stock, stir in the precooked vegetables. Keep adding ladles of stock and stirring them in, until the rice is creamy and just tender.
7. Take the pan off the heat and cover it with a lid. Leave it for 3 minutes, then stir in the parsley, parmesan and 2 pinches of pepper.

Nutritional Information (per portion)	
Energy (kcal)	459
Protein (g)	15.7
Potassium (mg/mmol)	163/4.1
Phosphorus (mg/mmol)	173/5.5
Sodium (mg/mmol)	460/19.8

This recipe is taken from the Kidney Friendly Cookbook produced by Dietitians and Dietetic Support Workers at a Paediatric Renal Unit in the UK. Please check with your Dietitian or Doctor that this recipe is suitable for you.

KITCHEN SCIENCE

How cooking potatoes the low potassium way can help your garden grow!

YOU'LL NEED:
POTATOES ✓
SAUCE PAN ✓
STRAINER ✓
WATERING CAN ✓

After you have reduced your intake of ultra processed foods, especially those containing potassium additives, and followed your dietitian's advice to reduce the portions of natural potassium containing foods, you may be advised to use the **'low potassium cooking method'.** This method will help to reduce your intake of potassium from potatoes, but remember it will also cause the loss of some water-soluble vitamins. So, be sure to include a good amount of low-potassium vegetable and fruit in your diet to ensure you are getting lots of important vitamins and minerals.

Use the water from cooking your potatoes for your plants!

When you use low potassium cooking methods, you will remove the water that your potatoes have boiled in and usually you throw this away! Well, this water contains minerals such as potassium, which although you don't need, your plants do!! It can act as a fertilizer for plants. So here's how to make use of your water from your boiled potatoes.

STEP 1.

To use potato water on your plants, you will need to boil some potatoes in a pot with enough water so that all the potatoes are completely submerged.

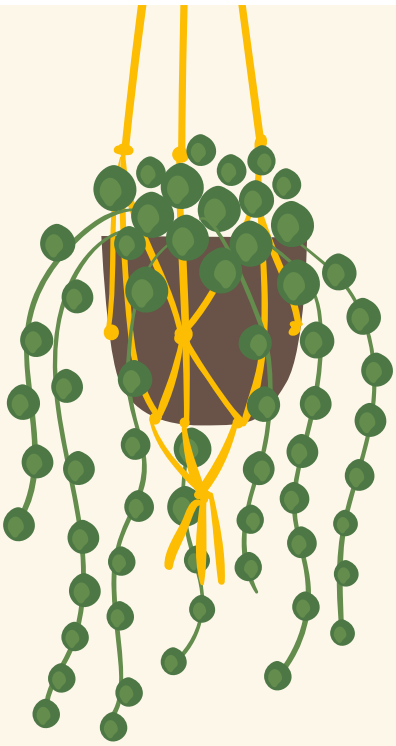
Complete this process twice, draining between each boil and pouring the water away, into a suitable watering can or container.

x2

IMPORTANT: Let the boiling water cool down before watering your plants

STEP 2.

Once your potatoes are cooked, you can remove them and now use the water. Let the water cool down first as warm.



STEP 3.

Use your cooled water to water your plants and vegetables.

STEP 4.

Watch your plants bloom whilst enjoying your low potassium potatoes with your meals!!

NOTE: When hot and fresh out of the pot, potato water can be used as a weed killer!!

Vitaflo (International) Ltd is a clinical nutrition company who specialise in developing products and resources for those with kidney disease. The information in this newsletter is for general information only and must not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment. Your dietitian and doctor will provide you with advice with regards to the management of your condition and it is important that you follow the advice that they provide.

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Vitaflo International Ltd, Suite1.11, South Harrington Building, 182 Sefton Street,
Brunswick Business Park, Liverpool, L3 4BQ, UK.

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