

Nutrition and early-stage kidney disease

Enjoying a healthy diet is important for everybody. It is especially important for people with kidney disease. Your diet can help slow down the decline of your kidney disease. The types of food you eat play an important role in:

- Achieving a healthy weight
- Controlling blood pressure
- Managing blood glucose levels if you have diabetes
- Managing cholesterol levels

All these factors can lead to better kidney and overall health.

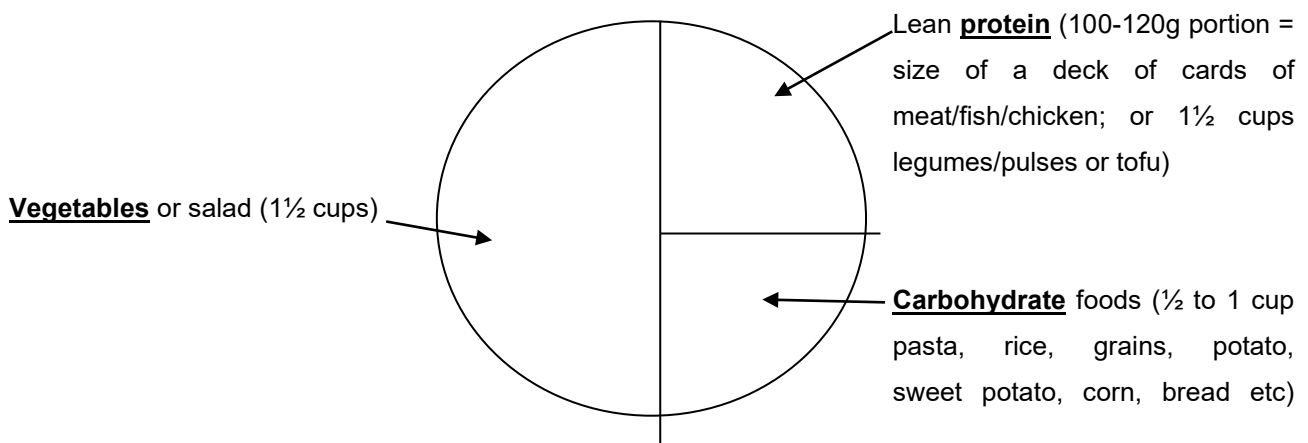


What diet is recommended?

There is **no standard** 'kidney diet', and each person is different. Your Dietitian will talk to you about a healthy diet for you, based on your health needs and blood results. These are some general tips:

- Eat regular meals e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Eat a variety of foods from all the food groups - especially plant-based foods and wholegrains
- Aim for a colourful mix of fruit (2 servings a day) and vegetables (5 servings a day)
- Don't eat too much protein (see explanation below)
- Use herbs and spices to flavour foods instead of salt
- Cook fresh as much as possible, and eat less unhealthy options such as ultra-processed foods, takeaways, and soft drinks

This is a good guide for a healthy dinner plate:



How much salt should I eat?

Too much sodium (which is found in salt) can lead to high blood pressure and swollen feet and ankles. It can also cause a quicker decrease in kidney function. Sodium is only needed in very small amounts and there is plenty in natural foods. Less than **2300mg of sodium** per day (equal to 1 teaspoon of salt) is recommended, and many people struggle to keep to this limit. For example, a toasted ham and cheese sandwich has around 1700mg and 2-3 pinches of added salt has 1500mg.



You should aim to reduce your salt intake.

- **Stop adding salt** in your cooking and at the table. Use herbs and spices instead e.g. pepper, parsley, garlic, ginger, onion, chilli, lemon or lime juice etc.
- Limit takeaways and ultra-processed foods e.g. deli meats, sausages – these all contain a lot of added salt
- Fresh is best - cook from fresh foods e.g. home cooked chicken pieces instead of a rotisserie or BBQ chicken
- Choose low salt, reduced salt and no added salt alternatives where you can

Your taste buds will adapt to a low salt diet, so give it time.

How much protein should I eat?



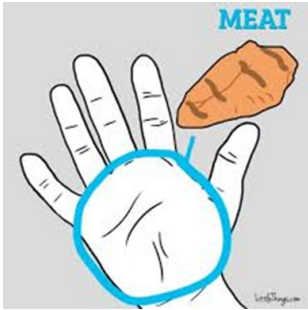

Protein is found in:

- Meat, chicken, fish
- Eggs
- Dairy products
- Nuts and seeds
- Tofu and plant-based proteins like legumes and pulses e.g. chickpeas, black beans, lentils, 4 bean mix, baked beans etc



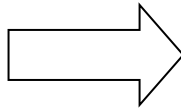
Protein is needed to keep your muscles strong and recover from illness or injury. As the body digests protein foods, it produces a waste product called **urea** which is filtered by the kidneys. Eating too much protein causes your kidneys to work harder and can decrease kidney function. Eating too little protein can cause muscle loss, weakness, and increase your risk of illness. Low protein diets are no longer recommended. Getting the right balance can be tricky.

You should aim to eat a **moderate** or medium **amount of protein** each day. Many people may need to cut back their protein portions. For an individualised meal plan please discuss with your dietitian. For example:

	Amount of Protein
Breakfast	<p>Cereal with 1 cup milk and a sprinkle of nuts or seeds</p> <p><u>Or</u> 2 pieces of wholegrain toast with a tub of yoghurt</p> 
Lunch	<p>1 slice (30g) of cold meat/chicken or 1 egg or ½ small tin (50g) tuna or ½ cup legumes/pulses/tofu</p> <p><u>With</u> cheese and salad, vegetables, bread, pasta, and/or rice</p> 
Dinner	<p>100-120g portion of lean meat, fish, or chicken = about the same size as a deck of cards or a lady's palm</p> <p><u>Or</u> 1½ cups legumes/pulses/tofu</p> <p><u>With</u> salad, vegetables, pasta, and/or rice</p> 
Other	<p>2-3 servings of dairy products are recommended per day e.g. 1 cup of milk + tub yoghurt + 1 slice cheese</p>  <p>2 servings of fruit are recommended per day</p>



Reduce processed meats



Choose fresh meats, chicken, fish, eggs and plant-based proteins

The **type of protein** you eat is also important. Many people need to reduce intake of:

- Processed meats e.g. ham, bacon, sausages, deli meats, rotisserie chicken etc
- Red meat (aim for less than 350g per week or a small portion a few times a week of lean steak, chops, mince, or roast meats)

Instead, you should choose:

- Fish, particularly oily varieties e.g. salmon and sardines
- Chicken
- Eggs (aim for up to 7 per week)
- Tofu and plant-based proteins like legumes and pulses e.g. chickpeas, black beans, lentils, 4 bean mix, baked beans etc.

Try and have at least one main meal per week that's 'meat free' e.g. 'Meat Free Mexican Monday' of enchiladas made with black beans and vegetables.

What about potassium and phosphate?

- These are healthy nutrients processed by the kidney.
- Potassium helps control blood pressure.
- Phosphate helps keep bones strong.
- Depending on your kidney function, sometimes these nutrients may build up too high in the blood. Your Doctor will check the levels regularly in your blood tests and refer you to the Dietitian if you need to make any diet changes.
- Not everyone needs a low potassium or low phosphate diet. Please do not restrict your diet unless you have been advised to, because they are healthy nutrients.

How much fluid should I drink?

The recommended amount is different for different people. Drinking too much or not enough fluid can damage your kidneys. You should drink to your thirst and check with your Doctor regularly about your fluid allowance. Some people with low kidney function may be asked to cut down how much fluid they drink – this is called a fluid restriction. This is sometimes recommended for people who get swelling or shortness of breath.

What about exercise?

Regular exercise is important. It helps with:

- Blood pressure control
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Diabetes management
- Strength and fitness



It is recommended that all Australians exercise for 30 minutes most days of the week. If you are unable to exercise for 30 minutes continuously then splitting it into several shorter sessions a day is also beneficial e.g. 3 x 10 minutes. Good exercise includes walking at a pace at which you can talk comfortably. Exercise could also include mowing the grass, housework, dancing, swimming or cycling. If you want to lose weight, you may need to do some longer exercise sessions (45-60 minutes) and follow a reduced energy diet - you can speak with a dietitian to help achieve this.

Consult with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

Things I can do to improve my diet for early-stage kidney disease:

1.

2.

3.

4.

For further information contact your Dietitian or Nutritionist: _____