

Nutrition and Dietetics

Renal Disease - Christmas on a renal diet

Christmas can be a difficult time to manage your renal diet, but with a little planning you will be able to enjoy some traditional Christmas foods. The following information should help you to manage your diet over the Christmas period.

Potassium

Whilst many traditional Christmas foods are high in potassium, there are lots of lower potassium alternatives, which are listed below in the 'Christmas foods' section. You can also ask your dietitian for our 'Renal Christmas Recipes' for some extra seasonal ideas.

On Christmas Day and New Year's Day it is okay to indulge in one or two extra high potassium foods in addition to your normal renal diet, for example:

- 6 brazil nuts (20g)
- 5 whole walnuts (34g)
- 20 hazelnuts (20g)
- 20 peanuts (20g)
- 1 small bag of twiglets
- 5 small squares of milk chocolate
- 6 small squares of white chocolate
- 8 small squares of plain chocolate
- 6 fancy/filled chocolates
- 1 small bag of toffees or fudge



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If you are attending Christmas parties or events, consider planning ahead. Reduce potassium, phosphate, and fluid intake during meals beforehand to increase the range of foods you can eat when you are out.

Fluid

Fluid can be difficult to manage over the Christmas period, especially if you have a longer gap between dialysis days at any point over the festive season.

Fluid overload can be very dangerous and can lead to hospital admission, so it is important to continue to monitor your fluid intake and keep within any targets you may have.

Avoid salty foods and snacks such as salted nuts and crisps, as eating these can create feelings of thirst. This increases the likelihood of you going over your fluid allowance, especially in social situations where you may be tracking your intake less closely.

Alcohol

Alcohol should be counted within your fluid allowance, and you should aim to drink within recommended safe alcohol limits. Please ask your dietitian for information regarding safe drinking limits if you need to.

Spirits are lower in potassium and fluid content, whilst beer, lager, cider, and wine contain much larger amounts of potassium and fluid and should be limited to 1 small glass per day.

Christmas foods - festive food swaps

Cakes and puddings:

- Mince pies – try to limit these as they can contain a lot of dried fruit which is high in potassium. If you are making your own, add extra grated apple to the mixture to reduce the potassium content (see our recipe).
- Rich fruit cakes such as Christmas cake and Christmas pudding also contain a lot of dried fruit and should be avoided. If you would like to try

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making a low potassium Christmas cake as an alternative, ask for our low potassium recipes.

- As an alternative to high potassium fruit cakes and mince pies, try sponge cake, Madeira cake, vanilla swiss roll, cherry cake, crème brulee or panna cotta and Pavlova or meringue. These are ideal low potassium sweet treats. If you are feeling adventurous, a baked Alaska is a fun low potassium pudding. A Christmas trifle is also a suitable festive choice.

Sweets and Chocolate:

- Boiled sweets, mints, jellies, marshmallows, and Turkish delight are all suitable low potassium treats
- Chocolate is high in potassium - if having occasionally, it is best to choose a chocolate coated biscuit, wafer, or a soft centre rather than solid chocolate. Plain chocolate contains less potassium than milk chocolate

Fruit and nuts

- Satsumas, tangerines, and clementines are a healthy, low potassium fruit snack.
- Avoid dried fruit and nuts
- Dried cranberries and glace/cocktail cherries are ok

Nibbles and party snacks

- Low potassium nibbles include corn snacks (Doritos, corn crisps, Tortilla chips, Niknaks, Quavers, Wotsits), cream cheese with crackers, rice biscuits and Snack a Jacks, sweet popcorn, bread sticks, carrot, or cucumber sticks. Be aware that some crisps have high salt content.
- Avoid dips such as hummus or taramasalata, guacamole or salsa, and instead choose those made with crème fraiche, mayonnaise, cream cheese or yoghurt
- Chicken nuggets or goujons, mini pizzas, sausage rolls, onion rings and cocktail sausages are suitable from a potassium perspective, but can be higher in phosphate so ensure you take any prescribed phosphate binders when enjoying these foods
- Meat substitute/vegetarian versions of the above are also appropriate

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- Avoid garlic mushrooms, loaded potato skins and any other snacks containing high potassium vegetables or nuts

Example Christmas day lunch menu

(All recipes are available on request from Dietetic Department, along with more suggestions for festive treats)

Starter

- Prawn or Crab Cocktail or
- Parma Ham with Pear or
- Sweet chilli and cheese dip with Melba toast (see our recipe)
- Garlic bread

Main Course

- 3-4 slices roast turkey/pork/beef/lamb/chicken or
Easy lentil roast
- Roast potatoes, boiled for 20 mins or mashed potatoes
- Small portion of high potassium vegetables like Brussel sprouts, parsnips
- Portion of low potassium vegetables like maple glazed carrots, cauliflower, peas*
- Gravy or bread sauce to be counted within fluid allowance
- Small portion of stuffing, sausage, or bacon

*Boil vegetables and don't use cooking water to make the gravy

Dessert

- Lemony spiced poached pears or
- Christmas sherry trifle or
- Renal Christmas pudding or
- Christmas pudding cheesecake

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Example Christmas day tea menu

Turkey and cranberry sauce sandwich/tuna mayonnaise sandwich or egg mayonnaise sandwich

Bread/crackers and butter with small portion of meat, salmon, cheese, or pâté (see our recipes) with a green salad and/or pasta/rice salad

Spiced shortbread stars/shortbread biscuits or

Gingerbread trees or

Low potassium mince pies or

Pineapple and Ginger pavlova

Remember your fluid restriction.

Take medication as normal, including your phosphate binders with meals.

Produced by Coventry Renal Dietitians, University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust.

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Patient Information

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