

Nutrition and Dietetics

Renal Disease - Christmas on a renal diet

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

Everyone with renal disease has slightly different dietary needs. It's important to speak to your kidney dietitian for more personalised advice.

Potassium

Christmas is a time for enjoying treats, but if you need to manage your potassium levels, it's important to take extra care during the festive season.

While many traditional Christmas foods are high in potassium, there are lots of lower-potassium alternatives listed in the '**Christmas foods**' section below.

You can still enjoy high-potassium foods and drinks but keep portion size small and limit how often you have them, especially if you follow a low-potassium diet. You can also ask your dietitian for our 'Renal Christmas Recipes' for some extra seasonal ideas.



Patient Information

On Christmas Day and New Year's Day, it is okay to enjoy a treat or two of a high-potassium food 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

If you're attending Christmas parties or festive events:

- Reduce your potassium, phosphate, and fluid intake in earlier meals to give yourself more flexibility later.
- Let your host know about your dietary needs so they can accommodate you.
- Don't arrive hungry, having a small meal or snack can help prevent overeating.

Phosphate

If you need to watch your phosphate levels, try to limit foods such as cheese, dairy products, nuts, bony fish (like mackerel and sardines), chocolate, and dark soft drinks like Coca-Cola.

If you've been prescribed phosphate binders, it's important to remember to take them. Your eating habits might change during Christmas, so you may need to adjust how you take your binders. If you're eating out, be sure to bring them with you.

Patient Information

Fluid

Managing fluid intake can be difficult during the Christmas period, especially if there is a longer gap between dialysis sessions.

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

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.

Remember that gravy, soups, custard, tea and alcohol are included in your fluid restriction. Fruit and vegetable juices are high in potassium and should be limited. Fizzy drinks, squash, flavoured water, and mixers are fine. Take care with cola drinks, as they contain more phosphate.

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. However, beer, lager, cider, and wine (including mulled wine) and other similar drinks contain much higher levels of potassium and fluid and should be limited to 1 small glass per day. Port, dry sparkling wine and sherry have lower potassium content but should be taken in moderation.

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, using apple and less dried fruit makes this a great festive treat that is low in potassium, phosphate, and salt (see our recipe).

Patient Information

- 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 making a low-potassium Christmas cake as an alternative, ask for our low-potassium Christmas cake recipe.
- Instead of high-potassium fruit cakes and mince pies, try sponge cake, Madeira cake, vanilla swiss roll, cherry cake, crème brulee, panna cotta, 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, fruit gums, fruit pastilles and Turkish delight are all suitable low-potassium treats.
- Chocolate is high in potassium. If you have it occasionally, it is better to choose a chocolate coated biscuit, wafer, or a soft centre treat rather than solid chocolate. Plain chocolate contains less potassium than milk chocolate.

Important: People with diabetes should limit sugary foods.

Fruit and nuts

- Satsumas, tangerines, apples, peach, blueberries and clementines are healthy, low-potassium fruit options.
- Avoid dried fruit and nuts.
- Dried cranberries and glace/cocktail cherries are okay.
- Bananas, prunes, dates, jackfruit, and avocados are high in potassium and should be eaten in moderation or avoided on a low-potassium diet.

Warning: Avoid starfruit. Starfruit contains a chemical that can be extremely dangerous for people with kidney problems.

Nibbles and party snacks

- Potato and vegetable crisps are naturally high in potassium and should be limited to small portions. Crisps or snacks made from corn, wheat or rice tend to be lower in potassium.

Patient Information

- Some potato and non-potato crisp varieties have potassium chloride added as a salt substitute. If potassium chloride appears on the ingredients list, please avoid.
- Low potassium nibbles include:
 - cream cheese with low-salt crackers
 - rice biscuits
 - snack a Jacks, Sun bites
 - shortbread
 - sweet popcorn
 - bread sticks
 - Pretzels
 - carrot or cucumber sticks.

Note: Be aware that most snacks have high salt content and should be limited.

- Pakoras and Bhaji (use wheat or rice flour instead of gram flour, boil vegetables first and discard the water used for boiling).
- Kachori (without sultanas) and Puri (made from plain flour).
- Avoid dips such as hummus, taramasalata, guacamole or salsa, 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. Be sure to take any prescribed phosphate binders when enjoying these foods.
- Meat substitute/vegetarian versions of the above are also appropriate.
- Avoid garlic mushrooms, loaded potato skins, Bombay mix, plantain, bread fruit and any other snacks containing high-potassium vegetables, fruit, or nuts.

Example Christmas day lunch menu

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

Starter

Patient Information

- Prawn or crab cocktail
- Parma ham with pear
- Sweet chilli and cheese dip with Melba toast (see our recipe)
- Garlic bread

Main Course

- All unprocessed meats are fine. 3-4 slices roast turkey, pork, beef, lamb, chicken, goose or duck.
 - Cured, smoked, salted, tinned and processed meats and fish are high in salt. These foods should be kept to a minimum.
 - Avoid ready-to-eat smoked or cured fish products such as smoked salmon or gravlax due to an increased risk from listeriosis.
 - Listeriosis is an infection caused by bacteria called listeria. People with kidney disease and people taking medicines or having treatments that weaken their immune system, are at higher risk of serious illness from listeriosis.
- A portion of beans, pulses, dhal, paneer, Quorn, tofu or soya products can replace a portion of meat, chicken, fish or eggs.
- Roast or mashed potatoes (par-boiled before roasting/mashing).
- Small portion of high-potassium boiled vegetables like Brussel sprouts, parsnips.
- Portion of low-potassium vegetables like maple-glazed carrots, cauliflower, peas*.
- Homemade gravy or bread sauce are much better alternatives to packet/granules and should be counted within fluid allowance.
- Small portion of stuffing, sausage, or bacon.
- Asian: fish/chicken curry, meat tandoori, chapatti, rice or noodles.
- Afro-Caribbean: Traditional roast dinner or rice and peas – boil vegetables.

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

Dessert

- Lemony spiced poached pears

Patient Information

- Christmas trifle (limit the sherry)
- Renal Christmas pudding
- Christmas pudding cheesecake
- Sorbet is good but remember to watch your fluid intake
- Ice-cream, apple pies, Battenberg cake, jam tarts, donuts,
- Jellabi (jalebi), coconut barfi, chena murki, rice kheer

Important: People living with diabetes should limit sugary foods.

Example Christmas day tea menu

- Sandwiches: Any type of bread, white, brown, granary, pitta, ciabatta, naan
- Fillings: Ham and mustard, chicken mayonnaise, cheese pickle, chicken tikka, tuna cucumber, chicken tikka, egg & cress, beef
- Turkey and cranberry sauce sandwich/tuna mayonnaise sandwich or egg mayonnaise sandwich
- Bread/low-salt 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
- Gingerbread trees
- Low potassium mince pies
- Pineapple and Ginger pavlova

Things to Remember

- Your fluid restriction.
- To take medicines as prescribed, including your phosphate binders with meals.
- Involve family and friends in meal preparation to ease stress and make sure dietary needs are met.

Patient Information

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

Contact number: 024 7696 6151

Find us on X: @UHCW_RenalDiet

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 6151 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:

www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback



Document History	
Department:	Dietetics
Contact:	25161
Updated:	December 2024
Review:	December 2027
Version:	8
Reference:	HIC/LFT/866/09