

Potassium, There are many good options.

Potassium is an essential mineral and electrolyte that people need as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Potassium is vital because it regulates your body's fluid balance and controls the electrical activity of your heart and other muscles. It also serves several other functions in the human body. It lowers blood pressure, decreases the risk of stroke, supports bone-mineral density, protects against loss of muscle mass, and reduces the formation of kidney stones.

Consuming a high-potassium diet has been linked to a lower risk of death from cardiovascular disease.

Potassium helps maintain normal blood pressure by reducing the side effect of sodium, but about 90 percent of the population in the United States consumes more sodium than recommended with only about 3 percent meeting the recommendations for potassium.

According to guidelines from the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science, people ages 14 and older should consume at least 4,700 milligrams of potassium daily. Children 9 to 13 years old should consume 4,500 milligrams of potassium daily. Children 4 to 8 need 3,800 milligrams daily. Recommendations for toddler's ages 1 to 3 years old are 3,000 milligrams daily.

The best way to get the potassium your body needs is by eating a variety of potassium rich foods daily. There are, however, precautions you need to consider. If too much potassium is consumed, it is normally excreted from the body without problems. Some people with medical conditions such as kidney disorders or heart arrhythmias may be required to limit consumption.

Here are some foods that are high in potassium:

- Potatoes with skin
- Beet greens
- Beans, including white, soy and kidney
- Sweet potatoes
- Salmon
- Orange Juice
- Swiss chard
- Mackerel, halibut and tuna
- Non-fat or low-fat milk (white or chocolate)
- Spinach
- Avocados
- Tomatoes
- Carrots

You can increase your potassium intake with these following tips:

- Consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Choose fruits and vegetables for snacks.
- Drink non-fat or low-fat milk, or consume non-fat or low-fat yogurt as each of these items contain 300-400 milligrams of potassium.

- Include beans, legumes and peas in your meals. If you buy canned beans, select no salt or drain the liquid to reduce the sodium.
- Prepare sweet potatoes and other potatoes with the skin on them, to get the most potassium.
- Include lean meats such as fish, chicken and turkey in your diet.