

Module 1, Lesson 3 Handout: Potassium Recommendations for Heart Health

Potassium is an important mineral in the diet, as it helps your nerves to function and muscles to contract as well as your heart to beat normally. Potassium also helps control blood pressure levels and has been shown to lower the risk of having a stroke. To keep your heart healthy and your muscles and nerves functioning at their best, the goal is to increase potassium intake while lowering sodium intake.

Potassium Recommendations

	1-3 years old	4-8 years old	9-13 years old	14+ years old
Potassium, Milligrams (mg) (AI*)	3,000mg	3,800mg	4,500mg	4,700mg

*AI= Adequate Intake; Recommended Average Daily Intake Level

Insufficient potassium intake or a deficiency in potassium, known as hypokalemia, may lead to complications such as increased blood pressure, muscle weakness, fatigue, and in severe cases, decreased cardiac function. Lab research has found a causative link between low potassium intake and vascular calcification, suggesting that increasing potassium in the diet may help prevent hardening of the arteries, which is a contributing factor in most heart-related conditions.

Potassium in the Diet

Most Americans fall short on daily potassium recommendations, mostly because they are eating too many packaged processed foods and not enough of the fresh stuff. Potassium is found in many plant and animal foods, including fruits, vegetables, legumes and nuts, as well as meat, poultry, fish and yogurt. It's not so hard to meet potassium recommendations when you're focusing on wholesome fresh foods. Refer to the Sources of Potassium in the Diet tool in this lesson when working with clients to increase their intake of potassium.