

Potassium

Function

The nutrient potassium is one of the most important and plentiful minerals found in the cells of the body. Potassium, in conjunction with sodium and chloride, aids in the regulation of the body's electrolyte balance.

A proper balance of potassium, calcium, and magnesium is essential for normal muscle function in the body. This is especially true of cardiac (heart) muscle. Potassium has a lowering effect on blood pressure and helps protect blood vessels from damage. Potassium also plays an important role in the conduction of nerve impulses through out the body.



Risks of Low Potassium Intake

An adult needs between 2,000 mg and 6,000 mg (2-6 grams) of potassium a day. A person is capable of obtaining this amount by eating a well balanced diet. However, many Americans are taking in less than what is needed.

The body's need for potassium may be increased due to losses of body fluids from vomiting, diarrhea, use of laxatives or sweating. Certain blood pressure medications also cause the body to lose potassium and necessitate an increase in intake. Some of the symptoms of potassium deficiency are muscle weakness, nervous irritability, and eventually an irregular heart beat.

Prevention of Potassium Deficiency

The best prevention is to eat a balanced diet containing foods that are good or excellent sources of potassium. Potassium is often found in foods that are not highly processed.

Dietary Sources of Potassium

Excellent sources of Potassium 400 mg or more per serving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Banana, 1 med.✓ Orange Juice, 1 cup✓ Cantaloupe, 1 cup✓ Baked Potato, 1 med.✓ Prunes, 10 med.✓ Flounder, baked, 3oz✓ Dried figs, 5 med.
Good Sources of Potassium 200 to 400 mg per serving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Broccoli, ½ cup✓ Carrots, raw, 1 large✓ Orange, 1 small✓ Chicken, cooked, 3oz✓ Lentils, cooked, ½ cup✓ Strawberries, 1 cup

Balance Potassium



Too little or too much potassium can have serious outcomes on your body. Balance is required. Excess potassium intake can cause heart arrhythmia, weakness, anxiety, as well as loss of sensation in the extremities and confusion.

Do not exceed the recommended daily requirements without medical advice. It is almost impossible to do this if potassium is taken only from dietary sources. To have an excess of potassium, a person would most likely need to take potassium supplements, which should not be taken unless prescribed. Also, over-the-counter

potassium tablets have been known to
cause intestinal bleeding ulcers.

