



Hyperkalemia

Hyperkalemia is a serious health problem in which the blood contains too much potassium. Potassium is an electrolyte found in most foods. It helps keep the heart, nerves, and muscles healthy. Too much potassium can change how the heart beats.

People can have hyperkalemia when their kidneys are not working well. Kidneys balance how much potassium is in the body. Chronic kidney disease, chronic heart failure, and diabetes can raise the risk of having hyperkalemia.

Medicines, some of which are used in the treatment of heart disease, can also cause hyperkalemia:

- Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors (ACEis)
- Beta blockers
- Angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs)
- Calcium channel blockers
- Potassium-sparing diuretics
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

Does hyperkalemia have warning signs?

There may be no warnings. More advanced hyperkalemia can make the heart beat too slow or too fast. This must be treated right away at a hospital or clinic.

Is there a test for hyperkalemia?

A blood test measures how much potassium is in the blood. An electrocardiogram (EKG) may also be used to record electrical action of the heart.

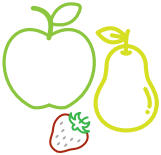


How is hyperkalemia treated?

Treatment depends on what caused the potassium to rise and how much of it is in the blood. The faster and higher the potassium rise, the more important it is to treat. Your doctor may:

- Monitor the amount of potassium in your blood and the health of your kidneys
- Add or adjust your medicines
- Ask you to stop eating foods that have too much potassium

Patients with hyperkalemia may need to eat fewer foods high in potassium. And they may need to eat more foods low in potassium. Below are examples of foods in each of those groups.

High- and lower-potassium foods

	High-potassium foods	Lower-potassium foods
	Bananas, melons, oranges, nectarines, kiwi, mango, papaya, prunes, pomegranates, dates, dried fruits, dried figs	Apples, blueberries, blackberries, cranberries, grapes, grapefruit, pears, pineapple, raspberries, strawberries
	Avocado, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, white and sweet potatoes, parsnips, pumpkin, winter squash, tomatoes and tomato sauce, spinach, Swiss chard	Asparagus, cooked cabbage and carrots, celery, corn, cucumber, eggplant, green or wax beans, green peas, lettuce (iceberg), onions, radishes, turnips, water chestnuts
	Milk and yogurt, nuts and seeds, bran and bran products, chocolate, granola, peanut butter, salt substitutes	Rice, pasta, bread (not whole grains), angel cake, yellow cake, pies without chocolate or high-potassium fruit, cookies without nuts or chocolate

Talk with a healthcare provider or dietitian to learn more about foods to eat or avoid if you have hyperkalemia.

Please note!

A quick rise or very high levels of potassium in your blood is very dangerous. If you feel your heart beating faster or slower, shortness of breath, chest pain, nausea, or vomiting, call 911 or go to an emergency room.