Making Sense of Phosphorus

Phosphorus is an important mineral that your body uses for energy and overall health. What you eat and drink can affect the amount of phosphorus in your blood. To lower your risk of heart disease, weak bones and death, choose foods and drinks with natural phosphorus and avoid phosphate additives.

**Phosphorus in Foods and Drinks**

*Natural Phosphorus*
Phosphorus occurs naturally in meats, dairy, grains, and vegetables. About half of this natural phosphorus is absorbed.

*Added Phosphorus*
Phosphorus is also added to many foods and drinks as a preservative. Nearly all of added phosphorus is absorbed. Foods and drinks with added phosphorus can be more harmful to your health than those with natural phosphorus.

*How Much Phosphorus is in Food and Drinks?*
When selecting a food or drink, look at what kind of phosphorus it has. The amount of phosphorus may be included on the Nutrition Facts, but this won’t tell you how much is natural or how much is added.

Registered Dietitians/Nutritionists (RDNs) recommend starting with the list of ingredients. If an ingredient has the letters “phos,” you know for sure that phosphorus has been added. If that’s the case, limit these foods and drinks.

*Did You Know?*
Even if phosphorus is not listed on the Nutrition Facts, the food or drink may still contain added phosphorus. Read the ingredient list to find out.

**take action!**
Read the Ingredients to find out if a food has added phosphorus. Look for ingredients with “phos” in the name, such as:

- Phosphoric acid
- Sodium phosphate
- Dicalcium phosphate

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What Foods Are Highest in Added Phosphorus?
The foods with the most added phosphorus are usually processed foods, packaged foods, and fast food.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGHER PHOSPHORUS PROTEIN</th>
<th>BETTER CHOICES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Processed meats like bacon, ham, hot dogs, chicken nuggets or strips, bologna, salami, or sausage</td>
<td>All-natural chicken, turkey, fish or seafood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breaded or fried meats, chicken, fish, or seafood</td>
<td>Lean and fresh beef, lamb, pork, veal, or wild game</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organ meats, such as kidney or liver</td>
<td>Cottage cheese with no “phos” ingredients</td>
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<tr>
<th>HIGHER PHOSPHORUS DAIRY</th>
<th>BETTER CHOICES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Non-dairy creamers, enriched almond or rice milk</td>
<td>Unenriched almond- or rice milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processed cheese, such as American</td>
<td>A small amount of natural cheese, such as Brie, Feta, Swiss, cheddar, or mozzarella</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processed cheese spreads and dips, such as Velveeta™, Cheez Whiz™, fat-free cream cheese or sour cream</td>
<td>Regular or low-fat cream cheese, Neufchatel, or sour cream</td>
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<td>Ice cream, pudding, yogurt, or frozen yogurt</td>
<td>Sherbet, sorbet, fruit ice, or Popsicles</td>
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<tr>
<th>HIGHER PHOSPHORUS FAST FOOD</th>
<th>BETTER CHOICES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grilled or fried chicken, including nuggets, sandwiches, strips, or wings</td>
<td>Fish filet sandwich (no cheese)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pizza, tacos, or hot dogs</td>
<td>Hamburger (no cheese)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any sandwiches with ham, American cheese, or bacon</td>
<td>Tuna or egg salad sandwich (no cheese)</td>
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<tr>
<td>French fries, other fried potatoes, biscuits, or macaroni &amp; cheese</td>
<td>Side salad without cheese</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coleslaw, apple slices, applesauce, grapes, or carrots</td>
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**HIGHER PHOSPHORUS BAKED GOODS**

- Biscuits, brownies, cakes, muffins, pancakes, pastries, or waffles that are ready-to-eat or made from a dry mix
- Refrigerated or frozen dough for biscuits, cookies, pastries, or sweet rolls

**HIGHER PHOSPHORUS DRINKS**

- Beer or wine
- Any drink that has “phos” listed in the ingredients:
  - Coke™, Pepsi™, Dr. Pepper™, energy or sports drinks, most bottled or canned coffees, teas, and flavored waters, Crystal Light™ grape, fruit punch, orange or raspberry flavors

**BEFTER CHOICES**

- Fresh loaf bread, buns, dinner rolls, bagels, English muffins, pitas, or small croissants without “phos” ingredients
- Reduced-salt popcorn, pretzels, or tortilla chips

**Better Choices**

- Water
- Drinks without “phos” ingredients:
  - 7-Up™, Sprite™, Sierra Mist™, root beer, orange soda, other sodas, fresh squeezed lemonade, fresh-brewed coffee or tea (made from coffee beans, coffee powder or tea bags)
  - AriZona™ teas, Pure Leaf™ teas, Snapple™ teas, Crystal Light™ (lemonades, tea and green teas, and all “pure” flavors)

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**Review**

- Which is more harmful to my health: natural or added phosphorus? *(Circle one)* Natural or Added
- What do I look for in the ingredients to see if a food contains added phosphorus? “__ __ __”.
- If the food label does not include the amount of phosphorus, where can you look to find out if there is any added phosphorus?

- **True or False?** Processed foods, fast food, and packaged foods are usually higher in added phosphorus? *(Circle One)* True or False
- What are a few foods or drinks with higher phosphorus that I will have less often?

- List a few lower-phosphorus foods or drinks that I can enjoy instead.
**Tips to Limit Phosphorus**

**do less**
- Limit processed meats and chicken.
- Limit dairy products such as cheese, ice cream, and milk to the amount recommended by your RDN, and avoid processed or imitation cheeses.
- Limit fast food and restaurant foods since many are high in added phosphorus.

**do more**
- Select fresh meats and home-cooking instead of convenience foods or packaged foods.
- Choose soft drinks or other bottled beverages without “phos” in the ingredients.
- Read the list of ingredients on all packaged foods, and limit foods with “phos” ingredients.

Ask your RDN for tips making healthier choices.

**goal summary**

I plan to:
1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________

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