

# 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**

Cholesterol	Less than 300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400 mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Fiber	25g	30g
Calories per gram:		
Fat	9	Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4
** Intake of trans fat should be as low as possible		
<b>INGREDIENTS:</b> WHOLE WHEAT AND WHEAT FLOUR, SALT, SPICES, RICE FLOUR, WHEY, CORN STARCH, LEAVENING (SODIUM BICARBONATE, SODIUM ALUMINUM PHOSPHATE, MONCALCIUM PHOSPHATE), BEET POWDER, PAPRIKA, CALCIUM SULFATE, NON-FAT MILK POWDER, EXTRACT OF PAPRIKA, DEHYDRATED EGG YOLK, CARAMEL COLOR (TREATED WITH SULFITING AGENT), AND GARLIC POWDER.		

## What Foods Are Highest in Added Phosphorus?

The foods with the most added phosphorus are usually processed foods, packaged foods, and fast food.

### HIGHER PHOSPHORUS PROTEIN

Processed meats like bacon, ham, hot dogs, chicken nuggets or strips, bologna, salami, or sausage

Breaded or fried meats, chicken, fish, or seafood

Organ meats, such as kidney or liver

### HIGHER PHOSPHORUS DAIRY

Non-dairy creamers, enriched almond or rice milk

Processed cheese, such as American

Processed cheese spreads and dips, such as Velveeta™, Cheez Whiz™, fat-free cream cheese or sour cream

Ice cream, pudding, yogurt, or frozen yogurt

### HIGHER PHOSPHORUS FAST FOOD

Grilled or fried chicken, including nuggets, sandwiches, strips, or wings

Pizza, tacos, or hot dogs

Any sandwiches with ham, American cheese, or bacon

French fries, other fried potatoes, biscuits, or macaroni & cheese

### BETTER CHOICES

All-natural chicken, turkey, fish or seafood

Lean and fresh beef, lamb, pork, veal, or wild game

Cottage cheese with no “**phos**” ingredients

Whole eggs or egg whites

Tofu, Beans, lentils

### BETTER CHOICES

Unenriched almond- or rice milk

A small amount of natural cheese, such as Brie, Feta, Swiss, cheddar, or mozzarella

Regular or low-fat cream cheese, Neufchatel, or sour cream

Sherbet, sorbet, fruit ice, or Popsicles

### BETTER CHOICES

Fish filet sandwich (no cheese)

Hamburger (no cheese)

Tuna or egg salad sandwich (no cheese)

Side salad without cheese

Coleslaw, apple slices, applesauce, grapes, or carrots

### 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

### BETTER 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)

## 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. \_\_\_\_\_

*Inclusion of brand names does not represent endorsement by RPG, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, or its Foundation. Additional kidney-related resources can be found at: [www.renalnutrition.org](http://www.renalnutrition.org).*