

Eating Out Guide for Kidney Disease

Introduction

Having kidney disease should not prevent you from eating out at your favorite restaurants. But eating out can be a challenge if you need to limit certain foods. To help you follow your diet, try these tips when dining out:

General Tips

- Plan ahead:
 - Look up the restaurant menu online to find lower sodium options or ask your registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) to help.
 - Cut back on sodium and potassium earlier in the day or weekend.
 - Ask your RDN if meals with beans, lentils, or nuts are OK for you.
- Restaurant portions can be large. **Share with a friend or take half of it home.**
- You can make the following special requests about the way food is prepared and served:
 - **Ask that your food be prepared without salt.** Do not salt your food when it arrives.
 - Request gravies, sauces, or salad dressing **on the side.**
 - **If you need to limit fluids,** ask your server to fill your glass full of ice and to remove your empty glass.



If you take phosphate binders, bring these along and take them during your meal.

American

- **Good breakfast choices** include eggs (no cheese), French toast, English muffin, hot cereal, bagel, or toast. Limit salty meats such as ham, sausage, and bacon.
- **Appetizer:** Choose plain wings or tossed salad instead of salted fried foods or potatoes.
- **Main Course:** Select unsalted, lean beef, pork, chicken, turkey, fish, or seafood that are baked, broiled, roasted, or grilled.
- **Side Dish:** Order asparagus, green beans, corn, cooked cauliflower or carrots, coleslaw, macaroni salad, rice or a dinner roll. Skip potatoes or sweet potatoes, if limiting potassium.
- **Dessert:** Choose sherbet, apple or blueberry pie, angel food cake, or a cookie without nuts or chocolate.



Fast Food

Most options are high in sodium, potassium, and phosphorus, so you will need to make careful food choices the rest of the day or weekend.



- Choose a plain hamburger, grilled chicken sandwich, or fish sandwich (without cheese or sauce) or a salad.
- Ask for a vegetable, fruit, or side salad, instead of French fries.
- Order a small non-cola beverage, if any. Do not get refills.

Italian

- **Appetizer:** Choose salad or unsalted bread. Soups and antipasto can be high in sodium.
- **Main Course:**
 - If you need to limit potassium, choose pasta with pesto, garlic and butter, or olive oil sauces **on the side**, instead of tomato-based sauces.
 - Choose unsalted beef, veal, chicken, fish, and shellfish. Prosciutto, Italian sausage, and pepperoni are high in sodium
 - If you order pizza, a slice without meat may be best along with a side salad.
- **Side Dish:** If you need to limit potassium, beware of tomatoes, cooked spinach, squash, potatoes or nuts.
- **Dessert:** Choose biscotti, Italian ice, almond cake, fruit tart, or a plain pastry instead of desserts made with custard, milk, or nuts.



Greek



- **Appetizer:** Limit olives, anchovies, fried calamari, and cheese or spinach filled pastries.
- **Main Course:** Choose unsalted, grilled fish, chicken, lamb, or beef. Gyros, souvlaki, moussaka, or pastitsio may be high in sodium.
- **Side Dish:** Ask for a Greek salad but limit the tomatoes, feta cheese, olives, and capers.
- **Dessert:** Try diples (pastries with honey), sponge or lemon cake, or butter cookies, instead of those made with custard, milk, or nuts.

Asian

Most Asian foods and sauces are high in sodium. Request that all sauces be **on the side** and **no MSG** is used. Choose ginger, hot pepper, or chili oil for added flavor instead of soy sauce or fish sauce.



- **Appetizer:** Choose a tossed salad, pot stickers, chicken wings, or spring rolls. Skip the soups since they are often high in sodium.
- **Main Course:** Choose grilled meats and vegetables or tempura fried foods, but limit the high-sodium sauces.
- Order meats, fish or shellfish that are cooked. Sushi and sashimi includes raw fish or seafood which increases your risk of food-borne illness.
- **Side Dish:**
 - White rice is a better choice than fried rice.
 - If you need to limit potassium, choose vegetables such as green beans, cabbage, carrots, onions, peppers, snow peas, and water chestnuts.
- **Dessert:** Fortune cookies.

Mexican

- **Appetizer:** Request unsalted tortilla chips. Salsa, guacamole, bean, and cheese dips are very high in sodium and potassium.
- **Main Course:** Choose beef, chicken, seafood, or vegetarian tacos, burritos, enchiladas, tostadas, taquitos/flautas, or fajitas. Ask for beans and toppings **on the side**.
- **Side Dish:** Choose white rice, lettuce, sautéed onions and bell peppers, and flour tortillas. Limit beans, refried beans, cheese, and Spanish/Mexican Rice.
- **Dessert:** Try apple enchiladas, sopapillas, or churros.



Ask your registered dietitian nutritionist for other tips on how to enjoy your favorite foods.