

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Low Potassium**
- **Lower your Sodium**
- **Coleslaw**
- **Sodium Myths**

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Why do I have low Potassium?

Hypokalemia, or low blood potassium levels, can be a very dangerous situation and is not to be taken lightly. Potassium is an important electrolyte in the body, and the majority of it stays inside the cells. The level outside the cells, low or high, can have significant effects on the body, especially the heart. In people who already have heart problems, the heart may be even more sensitive to these changes. The normal level of potassium in the blood is 3.6-5.0 meq/L (for most labs). At these levels, potassium helps muscles to contract, helps the heart to beat normally and regulate blood pressure as well. The kidneys help regulate how much potassium stays in the



body and how much gets out. So what makes potassium levels low? If you have ever had swelling in your legs, then you are very grateful to have drugs like Lasix or Demadex right? However, as you probably discovered, one downside to using some diuretics is the loss of potassium. This is probably the most common reason that cardiac patients have low potassium. Here is a list of other causes

and also medications that can decrease potassium levels: Lasix (Furosemide), Demadex (Torsemide), Bumex (Bumetanide), Microzide (Hydrochlorothiazide), Chlorthalidone, Zaroxlyn (Metolazone), Prednisone and other steroids, Insulins, Albuterol, Xopenex, Maxair, Theophylline, Proton pump inhibitors such as Prilosec, and Laxatives. Medical conditions that can cause low potassium include diarrhea and vomiting, malnutrition, alcoholism, abdominal surgeries, leukemia, low magnesium, and some kidney diseases. What are some of the signs and symptoms of low potassium? Muscle cramping, nausea and vomiting, tingling, numbness, constipation, palpitations, fainting or passing out, hallucinations, and confusion. Continued ...pg 3 (3,4).

Tip of the Month

Easy ways to Lower your Sodium Intake:

1. Find breads that have lower sodium. Remember to look at the serving size and also limit your servings.
2. Minimize meat and cheese on your next pizza. Add vegetables or even make your own.
3. Soups have one of the highest sodium contents. Search for a lower sodium variety and limit the serving size.
4. Eat half a sandwich and add a salad on your next restaurant trip.
5. Ask the deli for the lower sodium option when buying sandwich meat. Limit it to one or two slices on your sandwiches. Add plenty of lettuce and any other vegetables to help fill you up! (5).



Low Sodium Coleslaw



Recipe by Erik Williams,
author of *Breaking the
Salt Habit*. Buy it at our
website
www.myhearhelp.com

Ingredients:

1\2 cup light mayonnaise
1\3 cup sugar
1\2 cup skim milk
2 1\2 Tb lemon juice
2 1\2 Tb white vinegar
1\8 tsp black pepper
1 tsp poppy seeds
24 oz finely shredded cabbage
1\2 cup shredded carrot
3 Tb minced onion

Directions:

Mix all ingredients except
cabbage, carrots, and onion

In a different bowl combine
cabbage, carrots, and onion

Pour liquid over cabbage mix
and let sit overnight

The longer the slaw sits, the
better the taste!

Enjoy!

Health Information

Serving size: 1\2 cup
Servings: 10
Calories: 78
Total Fat: 3 g
Sat Fat <1 g
Sodium 69 mg
Cholesterol <1 mg
Carbs 12 g
Protein 1 g
Sugars 7 g
Fiber 2 g
Potassium 189 mg

Quote of the Month: “You don’t have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great” Zig Ziglar.

Bible Verse of the Month:

“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Did you Know?

Did you know that 9 out of 10 Americans consume too much sodium? The average sodium intake for American adults is 3400mg per day. The recommended amount for most individuals with heart problems and high blood pressure is around 1500mg per day. Hmmmm.....This is a problem. There are several myths that surround sodium intake such as sea salt is better than table salt. This is false. In general, sea salt almost identical sodium content has table salt. From a sodium standpoint, it is no better. Another myth is that if you do not salt your foods, you are not getting any sodium in your diet. False. According to the American Heart Association, more than 75 percent of sodium intake is from processed foods, not added salt. This is why it is so important to read your labels when purchasing foods.

There are not many individuals that do not have processed foods at some point in their day. The next myth is that salt is only found in “salty” foods. Also false. There are some foods in which the sodium may be unrealized. A few examples are cheese, bread, and chicken. Another myth is that sodium is only found in foods. There are some medications and over the counter medications that have high levels of sodium. Some examples include Tylenol, Alka-Seltzer, effervescent aspirin, and soluble ibuprofen. Ascorbic acid and zinc sulfate also contain sodium. Eating a low sodium diet does take some effort but it is not impossible. Not adding salt is definitely a start. Reading labels is key and trying to avoid or minimize foods that have high sodium content. Cooking at home will help keep you on track as well. (1,2).



Many people do not have any symptoms of low potassium or they attribute those symptoms to something else. This is why it is so important to get routine blood work (labs) done. Just because blood work is done, it does not mean the potassium is checked. So be proactive if you are at risk to have low potassium and make sure the levels are checked routinely by blood work. The potassium is included on labs such as a renal panel, basic metabolic panel, complete metabolic panel, chem-7 or chem-12. The order may just say potassium (K) as well.

Low potassium is treated depending on the level of potassium. If it is dangerously low, especially if you are experiencing symptoms, you may be asked to go to the emergency department for IV potassium administration. If there is a stomach reason for low potassium (malabsorption, vomiting, diarrhea etc) IV potassium may also need to be administered in a hospital setting usually. However if the potassium levels are in the mild to moderate range, either high potassium foods or a potassium supplement may be recommended. For foods high in potassium, check out our article on high potassium food <http://www.myhearhelp.com/2012/05/20/high-potassium-foods/>. There are many potassium supplements and forms of potassium that may be given and the doses range widely as well. Generally taking over the counter potassium is not enough and prescription potassium is usually recommended. Some common potassium supplements include Potassium chloride (K-Dur, Klor-Con, Micro-K), Potassium citrate (Urocit-K), and Potassium acid phosphate (K-Phos). Liquid forms are available and effervescent tablets that dissolve in liquid. Once a treatment has been given, the potassium level will usually need to be rechecked with blood work within the next few days or weeks. If the level was extremely low, your provider may ask you to have blood work the very next day.

If the potassium continues to remain low despite treatment, the magnesium level may need to be checked. If the magnesium level is low, it will need to be replaced with a supplement as well. If it is not low, the culprit of the low potassium will need to be addressed. If it is a medication, it may need to be stopped or changed to a different therapy. If it is a medical condition, focus will be turned to treatment of that condition. As always, do not change or discontinue medication without first discussing it with your healthcare provider. (3,4).