

# Hyperkalemia Conversation Starter

## What do you know about potassium and your kidneys?

- Potassium is a mineral and electrolyte found in many foods, and your body needs potassium to keep your muscles working.
- Healthy kidneys filter out the extra potassium in your blood. Because you have kidney disease, extra potassium goes back into your bloodstream instead of out of your body.
- **Hyperkalemia** (high-per-kuh-LEE-meeuh) is a chronic condition where there is too much potassium in your blood.
- Having too much potassium in your blood is dangerous and can lead to a heart attack or even death.

## Do you know your most recent potassium lab values?

Your potassium lab value on \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_ mEq/L.

DATE

VALUE

This value is (circle one):      **Too Low**      **Normal**      **Too High**

- If your last lab value was **normal**, you may still be at risk for hyperkalemia.
- If your last lab value was **too low**, having too little potassium in your blood can be harmful too.
- If your last lab value was **too high**, there are steps you can take to lower this value in the future and manage your risk for hyperkalemia.

Remember, potassium levels vary from day-to-day. Your lab value will always depend on:

- If you are taking your potassium binders regularly
- What you ate or drank on the day of your test
- The medicines you are taking. Certain blood pressure medicines like ACE (Angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors and ARBs (angiotensin II receptor blockers) can raise your potassium levels.
- Your kidney function on the day of the test

**Managing your potassium is a long-term goal, not a short-term objective.**

Visit [KidneyFund.org/beyondbananas](https://www.kidneyfund.org/beyondbananas) for tips, tools, and resources to manage your potassium.



**Hyperkalemia is a serious condition, but you have the power to manage your potassium levels.**

## 1. Take your potassium binders regularly.

### Are you currently on potassium binders?

#### Yes, I have a prescription!

- Keep taking them regularly. Skipping doses can have serious consequences.
- Talk to your doctor about any side effects you have. They may be able to prescribe another binder that is right for you.
- Keep a list of all the medicines you are taking. Your doctor can help you create a plan for how to safely take your binders with other medicines.

#### No, I would like to learn more.

- Potassium binders are a medicine in a powder form that you mix with water and drink.
- Potassium binders work by sticking to the potassium in your body and preventing potassium from building up in your blood.
- If your doctor has not prescribed potassium binders, you may need to manage your potassium on your own with a low-potassium diet.

#### Remember to take your potassium binder:

\_\_\_\_\_ Frequency of Dose

**Please note:** Common blood pressure medicines that protect your heart can also raise potassium levels in your blood. Taking a potassium binder allows you to safely take heart protection medicines like ACE inhibitors and ARBs. Ask your healthcare provider if these medicines may be right for you.

## 2. Track your daily potassium intake.

### Does your doctor recommend you track your potassium daily?

#### Yes, I track all the foods I eat.

- Keep it up! Remember to track potassium in your drinks too.
- Watch out for salt substitutes, as they may be low in sodium but are often high in potassium.
- Talk to your doctor about all medicines and herbal supplements you take. Some have added potassium.

#### Yes, but I don't know where to start.

- Read food labels and check for hidden potassium in the ingredients of packaged foods.
- Control your portions. Low potassium foods become high potassium foods in larger portions.
- Use the Beyond Bananas Potassium Food Guide and Potassium Tracker.

Your daily goal is to eat and drink \_\_\_\_\_ mg daily.

Fill In

**If you take potassium binders as prescribed, you can eat a wider variety of foods you enjoy.**