



## KNOW YOUR RISK FOR HIGH POTASSIUM – TAKE THE QUIZ

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Did you know that too much potassium can be dangerous, especially if you have kidney disease? Potassium is an important nutrient that helps keep your heart healthy and your muscles working right. But too much can lead to serious heart problems – even heart attack. Take this quiz to learn if you are at risk.

**Instructions: Place a checkmark in each item below that applies to you.**

**1. Do you have kidney disease or kidney failure?**

Yes       No

Having kidney disease or kidney failure can put you at risk for high potassium. Healthy kidneys control the amount of potassium in your blood. They balance the amount taken in with the amount lost in urine. If kidneys do not work well, they may not be able to remove extra potassium, which can build up and cause problems.

Don't know if you have kidney disease? One in nine people have kidney disease – and most don't know it. Kidney disease can be found with two simple tests during a routine check-up. At your next checkup, ask your healthcare professional for a blood test to estimate your GFR (glomerular filtration rate), and a urine test called "ACR (urine-to-creatinine ratio)."

**2. If you checked "yes" to having kidney disease or kidney failure, please answer questions A to C below. Otherwise, skip to question 3.**

**A. Do you also eat a lot of foods that are high in potassium?**

Yes       No

People with kidney disease or kidney failure may need to limit potassium-rich foods. Ask your healthcare provider or dietitian if you should limit potassium. Some foods that are high in potassium include bananas, oranges, melons, milk, tomatoes, avocados, broccoli, potatoes, sweet potatoes, beans, lentils and many others.

**B. Has your healthcare provider told you to eat fewer bananas?**

Yes       No

Bananas have a lot of potassium. If your healthcare provider has asked you to eat fewer bananas, it may mean that your potassium levels are too high.



Talk to your healthcare provider. Ask what you can do to keep your potassium levels in the normal range.

**C. Do you also drink flavored-bottled water, sports drinks, coconut water, fruit juices, smoothies, or high energy drinks?**

Yes       No

You may be surprised to learn that many sports drinks, high energy drinks, fruit juices, smoothies, and even some flavored waters that you buy in the supermarket are high in potassium. Unfortunately, potassium content is usually not included on food labels. To learn which drinks are safe for you to drink, ask your healthcare provider or dietitian.

**3. Do you have diabetes?**

Yes       No

If you have diabetes and your blood sugar is not under control, you may be at risk for high potassium. High blood sugar that is not well controlled causes potassium to move out of the cells in your body, and into your blood.

Not sure if you have diabetes? A simple blood test is all you need to find out. According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), over 29 million people have diabetes. Of these, over 8 million are undiagnosed. The ADA recommends that everyone aged 45 and over should be tested for diabetes, and if the results are normal, retested every three years. Some people may need to be tested earlier or more often.

**4. Are you taking blood pressure drugs called ACE inhibitors, ARBs, or beta-blockers?**

Yes       No

Certain blood pressure drugs can reduce the ability of your kidneys to remove potassium. These drugs are called angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin-receptor blockers (ARBs), or beta-blockers.

You may be taking these drugs if you have heart disease, high blood pressure, or kidney disease. However, you should not stop taking them without discussing it with your healthcare provider. There may be other ways to treat high potassium without stopping these important medicines.



**5. Are you taking any nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)?**

- Yes       No

NSAIDs are a specific group of pain relievers used to treat pain, headache, and fever. They are often available over-the-counter. Examples include different brands of ibuprofen, naproxen sodium, and ketoprofen. Long-term use can contribute to high potassium.

**6. Are you taking a type of immunosuppressive medication called tacrolimus or cyclosporine?**

- Yes       No

Immunosuppressive medications (also called “anti-rejection medicines”) hold back your body’s immune system, so that a transplanted organ can be accepted. Your immune system protects your body against germs and other “foreign” objects. Both tacrolimus and cyclosporine have been linked to high potassium. However, you should not stop taking these important medications without discussing it with your healthcare provider.

**7. Are you taking water pills (diuretics) called spironolactone, amiloride, triamterene, or eplerenone ?**

- Yes       No

Water pills (called “diuretics”) help get rid of unneeded water and salt in your body. This helps lower blood pressure and can make it easier for your heart to pump. There are several types. Some types can cause your potassium levels to rise. Which ones? Spironolactone, amiloride, triamterene, and eplereone can cause potassium levels to rise.

**8. Are you taking antibiotics called penicillin G, trimethoprim, and pentamidine?**

- Yes       No

Antibiotics are medicines that are used to treat infection. They attack and destroy germs and bacteria in your body. Penicillin G, trimethoprim, and pentamidine have been linked to high potassium.



**9. Are you taking heparin?**

- Yes       No

Heparin is used to prevent blood clots, including clots in your lungs, legs, or blood vessels. It may also be used prevent blood clots after surgery, during dialysis, or when a person is unable to move for a long time. Heparin has been linked to high potassium. However, you should not stop taking heparin without consulting your healthcare provider.

**10. Do you use salt substitutes?**

- Yes       No

Most salt substitutes are high in potassium. Check with your healthcare provider or dietitian before using salt substitutes, especially if you have kidney disease or other risk factors for high potassium.

**11. Are you taking any herbals?**

- Yes       No

Many herbals contain high levels of potassium, including Milkweed, lily of the valley, Siberian ginseng, Hawthorn berries, or preparations from dried toad skin or venom (Bufo, Chan Su, Senso). Do not take any herbals, supplements, or over-the-counter medicines without first checking with your healthcare provider, especially if you have kidney disease or other risk factors for high potassium.

**12. Are you taking any potassium supplements?**

- Yes       No

Supplements that contain potassium can overload your body's potassium levels, especially if you have kidney disease or other risk factors for high potassium. Do not take any supplements without checking with your healthcare provider or dietitian.

## End of Quiz

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## Quiz Results

### **If you answered “yes” to one or more questions:**

You may be at risk for high potassium (also called “hyperkalemia.”) The more “yes” items you checked, the higher your risk.

A simple blood test can find the level of potassium in your blood. Be sure you ask your healthcare provider about a blood test for potassium.

Many of the medications that can cause hyperkalemia are important and necessary. Do not stop taking them without discussing it with your healthcare provider. There may be other ways to treat high potassium without stopping these important medicines.

The good news? High potassium can be treated. Ask your healthcare provider what you can do to help control or treat high potassium.

### **If you answered “No” to all questions:**

Based on your answers, you do not appear to be at risk for high potassium. However, high potassium is very common, and it can lead to serious heart problems — even sudden death. Most people do not have warning signs. A routine blood test can show if your potassium is too high. At your next checkup, ask your healthcare provider about your potassium levels.

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