



## Potassium

Purpose	Hypokalemia-low potassium level	Hyperkalemia-high potassium level	Sources of Potassium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy nervous system</li> <li>• Regular heart rhythm</li> <li>• Stroke prevention</li> <li>• Muscle contraction</li> <li>• Helps control the body's water balance</li> <li>• Maintain stable blood pressure</li> <li>• Transmitting electrical impulses</li> </ul>	<p><b>Causes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate intake</li> <li>• Excessive GI losses (vomiting, diarrhea, suctioning, fistula drainage)</li> <li>• Excessive urinary loss</li> <li>• Potassium shifts inside the body can be caused from insulin use.</li> </ul> <p><b>Symptoms</b>-gradual in onset</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generalized weakness, fatigue</li> <li>• Muscle tenderness, weakness</li> <li>• Irregular hear rate</li> <li>• Low blood pressure</li> <li>• Increased sensitivity to other medications especially digoxin</li> <li>• Loss of appetite, Nausea, Vomiting</li> <li>• Gas, bloating, constipation</li> <li>• Shortness of breath, shallow breathing</li> <li>• Loss of interest in life, confusion, depression</li> <li>• Coma</li> <li>• Dry skin</li> <li>• Chills</li> </ul>	<p><b>Causes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive intake or gain               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rapid IV infusion</li> <li>- Tissue trauma, burns, and massive crushing injuries</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Inadequate urinary losses               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kidney failure</li> <li>- Potassium-sparing diuretics (spironolactone)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other chronic conditions such as Addison's disease</li> </ul> <p><b>Symptoms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscle twitching and cramps</li> <li>• Musculoskeletal weakness</li> <li>• No urine output</li> <li>• Nausea, Diarrhea</li> <li>• Intestinal pain and GI distress</li> <li>• ECG changes and cardiac arrest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dairy foods</li> <li>• fish</li> <li>• fruit               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- apricots</li> <li>- bananas</li> <li>- dates</li> <li>- raisins</li> </ul> </li> <li>• legumes</li> <li>• meat</li> <li>• poultry</li> <li>• vegetables               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- avocados</li> <li>- potatoes</li> <li>- winter squash</li> <li>- yams</li> </ul> </li> <li>• black-strap molasses</li> <li>• brewer's yeast</li> <li>• brown rice</li> <li>• whole grains</li> </ul> <p>Herbs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• catnip</li> <li>• hops</li> <li>• horsetail</li> <li>• nettle</li> <li>• plantain</li> <li>• red clover</li> <li>• sage</li> <li>• skullcap</li> </ul>

### Questions to ask physician about potassium use and management:

- What type of laboratory tests do I need?
- How frequently do I need laboratory tests?
- Am I on any other medication(s) that can be affected by changes in my potassium dosage?
- What medications am I on that can change my potassium level?
- What do I do if I take too many pills in one day or do not take enough?
- How concerned should I be if I run out of medication?