High Potassium  (Also Known as Hyperkalemia)

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR
A TOOL TO HELP KIDNEY PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS HAVE MORE EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THEIR HEALTHCARE TEAMS

What is hyperkalemia? Hyper what? What does this mean?
The medical term for high potassium is hyperkalemia. Hyperkalemia (high potassium) is a condition in which there is too much potassium in your blood. One way to remember this medical term is that “hyper” means excess or too much, and the symbol “K+” represents the word potassium. When you combine hyper (too much) with K+ (potassium), this = too much potassium, also known as hyperkalemia.

What is potassium and what does potassium do?
Potassium helps your heart beat regularly, controls blood pressure, balances fluid, helps muscles to move, and sends nerve signals throughout the body.

How will I know if I have high potassium?
Potassium levels are checked when you have your blood drawn. Normal potassium levels are between 3.5 and 5.0 mEq/L. If your blood work shows a potassium level is 5.1 or higher, then your healthcare team will get in touch with you right away.

I was told I have high potassium. Now what?
High potassium is very serious, but the good news is it can be managed. You must eat a diet lower in potassium, take the medication you have been prescribed, and have your blood drawn regularly.

Is high potassium related to my diet?
High potassium may be related to the foods you eat. You should avoid foods that are soaked in syrups and foods that come in a can as they may be high in potassium. Limit your portion of higher potassium foods such as beans, tomatoes, and bananas. Avoid foods that are very high in potassium such as potatoes, avocados, cooked greens, and salt substitute. Talk to a dietitian that specializes in kidney disease for specific advice or visit www.eatright.org to find one near you!

Is high potassium related to my kidney disease, my medication, or both?
High potassium may be related to both! If your kidneys are not working properly, too much potassium may stay in your blood and cause you to feel sick. High potassium may also be caused by some medications. Be sure to talk to your healthcare team about the medications you are on or when a new medication is prescribed to you.

Learn more at www.areyouok.org or www.aakp.org  |  #areyouok5point1
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