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
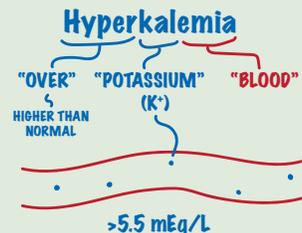
OK+
Are You O-K+?™
National High Potassium Awareness Day
5.1

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.

Hyperkalemia
"OVER" ↳ HIGHER THAN NORMAL — "POTASSIUM" (K+) — "BLOOD"
>5.5 mEq/L

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.

19 **K** Potassium 39.098

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.

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.

DIET — MEDICATION — REGULAR BLOOD DRAWS

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.

Normal potassium blood level (for most people)
Between 3.5 mEq/L and 5.0 mEq/L
3.5 (mEq/L) — 5.0 (mEq/L)
TOO LOW — NORMAL — TOO HIGH

What medications can control high potassium? Or help reduce it?
There are a variety of "water pills." Some "water pills" may be prescribed to help remove excess water from your body. By doing this, it lowers your potassium level. A potassium-binding medication may be prescribed to treat high potassium. It works by binding or attaching to the excess potassium and pulling it out of your blood cells. You will have to use the bathroom as the excess potassium is released in your stool.

Only **57%** of kidney patients with a history of high potassium understand the term hyperkalemia.[1]

48% of kidney patients feel worried about a diagnosis of hyperkalemia/high potassium.[1]

60% of kidney patients reported that improved K+ (potassium) levels had a positive impact on their lives.[1]

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!

Approximately **3 MILLION** people in the U.S. with chronic kidney disease and/or heart failure are living with high potassium levels.[2]

Learn more at **www.areyouok.org** or **www.aakp.org** | #areyouok5point1
Follow us at: [f] @kidneypatient [X] [Instagram] @kidneypatients and [f] [X] [Instagram] @areyouok5point1

[1]Source: Weinstein A, Beckrich A, Singer D, et al. Understanding the impact of elevated potassium on kidney patients' quality of life and treatment experience from a nephrology-based office survey. Abstract of a presentation at the virtual 2020 American Nephrology Nurses Association National Symposium, August 29-31, 2020.
[2]Hyperkalemia: Survey of Awareness and Experience among adults with CKD. A report of survey findings (March 6, 2017) https://www.kidney.org/sites/default/files/HyperkalemiaReport1.pdf.

DECADE OF THE KIDNEY — AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF KIDNEY PATIENTS

AAKP