



**A TO Z HEALTH GUIDE**

# Enjoy Your Own Recipes Using Less Protein

A guide for people with chronic kidney disease

If you have just learned that you have chronic kidney disease (CKD), your doctor may tell you to start limiting the protein in your diet. Changing your diet to meet your body's lower protein needs and still using the foods and recipes you are used to can be difficult. This fact sheet has ideas and tips to help you lower the protein in your favorite recipes, using the foods you normally use every day.

Looking for nutrition guidance? [Contact a CKD dietitian in your area.](#)

## Why do I need to eat less protein?

Protein is needed for growth, upkeep and repair of all parts of your body. Protein is found in almost all foods. When your body breaks down and uses the food you eat, a waste product called urea is made. When your kidneys are not working well, urea is not removed as it should be. Urea then builds up inside your body. Side effects of a high urea level are fatigue (tiredness) and poor appetite. By decreasing the amount of protein you eat, you can help your kidneys have a lighter workload, and they may be able to work for a longer time.

## How do you know how much protein you need daily?

Protein needs vary based on your age, sex, and overall general health. A registered dietitian/nutritionist (RDN) can determine your protein needs and also help you to plan a diet that meets those needs.

## What foods have the most protein?

There are two types of protein in the food we eat:

1. Animal protein is called high-value protein. It is easier for your body to use. Examples of high-value animal proteins are: red meat, chicken, turkey, pork, eggs and dairy products.

\* It is very important for you to eat enough high-value protein to keep your body healthy.

\* Dairy products are high-value protein, but are also high in phosphorus. You may need to use less dairy products in your diet to control your blood level of phosphorus.

1. Vegetable or plant proteins are low-value proteins. Examples of low-value proteins are: bread, cereals, dried beans, nuts, rice, pasta or noodles and vegetables.

A dietitian trained to work with those who have CKD can help you balance your protein.

## How can I eat less protein and still feel like I am eating enough?

Here are some tips to help you stretch protein foods so that a smaller amount will still feel like enough.

### Sandwiches

- Fill up sandwiches with lettuce, alfalfa sprouts, cucumber, chopped celery, apple, parsley or water chestnuts.
- Use meats that are sliced very thin; this will spread them out to look like a larger portion.
- Consider using bread that is more thinly sliced or low in protein, and consider more flavorful breads such as sour dough or rye bread.

### Soups

- Use lower-protein foods such as rice and pasta to add bulk to a soup without adding much protein.
- Use milk substitutes that are low in protein when making cream soups.

### Main Dishes

- Use vegetables and grains as the main dish and meats or other high-value protein as the side dish.
- Try kebabs, using smaller pieces of meats and more vegetables or fruits.
- Prepare dishes with small pieces of meat or chicken mixed in with rice or pasta. Fried rice dishes or ground meat with pasta work well.
- Toss together a chef salad with lettuce and crisp vegetables, adding smaller strips of meat and egg.
- For casseroles, use smaller amounts of meat than the recipe calls for, increase the starch (rice or pasta). Buy low-sodium soups to use in all casserole recipes.
- Allow yourself extra portions or larger servings of bread, rolls, pasta and rice to help meet your calorie needs without increasing your protein intake by very much.
- For a stronger cheese taste with a smaller amount of cheese, buy sharp cheddar, Parmesan or Romano cheese. A little bit of these cheeses will go a long way.

## What are calorie boosters?

When you are eating less protein, you may also eat fewer calories. Using fewer calories may cause you to lose weight. It is always important for you to stay at your healthiest weight for your body size. To keep from losing too much weight, you can "make up"

some of the calories lost when cutting down on protein foods by using foods with higher calorie levels.

- Heart-healthy fats such as canola oil, olive oil corn oil, safflower oil, soybean oil or sunflower oil and mayonnaise-type salad dressings can be used in larger amounts to fry or season foods.
- Candies such as hard candies, gumdrops, jellybeans, chewy fruit flavored candies and marshmallows can be used as desserts or snacks. Sweeteners such as honey, jams or jellies and white sugar can be added to foods or drinks to increase calories. (Please consult your dietitian if you are diabetic.)

## Modifying recipes to lower protein

Here are some examples of how you can take a typical recipe and modify it to lower the protein content:

### Festive Turkey Salad

(Original Recipe)	(Modified Recipe)
3 cups chopped cooked turkey breast without skin	1 1/2 cups chopped cooked turkey breast without skin
1/4 cup diced celery	1 cup diced celery
1 cup raw red delicious apples with skin	3 cups raw red delicious apples with skin
1/4 cup coarsely chopped pecans	1/4 cup coarsely chopped pecans
3 tbs. low calorie mayonnaise	3 tbs. regular mayonnaise
(Cranberry French Dressing)	(Cranberry French Dressing)
1/4 cup jellied cranberry sauce	1/2 cup jellied cranberry sauce
1/8 tsp. salt	1/8 tsp. paprika
1/8 tsp. paprika	1/8 tsp. dry mustard
1/8 tsp. dry mustard	1/8 tsp. pepper
1/8 tsp. pepper	1 tbs. vinegar
1 tbs. vinegar	2 tbs. vegetable oil
2 tbs. vegetable oil	
Yield: 4 one-cup servings with 2 tbs. dressing on each serving	Yield: 6 one-cup servings with 2 tbs. dressing on each serving

Combine first five ingredients in large bowl. Stir well. Cover and chill thoroughly. Serve with Cranberry French Dressing. Dressing: Combine first four dressing ingredients in small bowl, stirring with a wire whisk until smooth. Gradually add vinegar to cranberry mixture, alternately with oil, beginning and ending with vinegar. Stir well with each addition.

National Renal Diet Exchanges: (per serving)

Original Recipe

Modified Recipe

Meats	6	Meats	1
Vegetables	1	Vegetables	1
High Calorie	1	Fats	2
		Fruits	1
Protein	43 grams		
		Protein	9 grams

Adapted from a recipe developed by the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease (MDRD) Study - University of Iowa Center.

#### Chicken Pasta Casserole

(Original Recipe)	(Modified Recipe)
1 12-oz package egg noodles	1 12-oz pkg. regular or low-protein noodles
1-1/2 lb ground chicken or beef	1/2 lb ground chicken or beef
1 tsp. onion salt	1 cup diced celery
1 tsp. garlic salt	1 tsp. onion powder
Accent to taste	1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. black pepper	1 tsp. black pepper
1 6-oz can tomato paste	1 6-oz can tomato paste
1 4-oz can mushroom stems and pieces (drained)	1 4-oz can mushroom stems and pieces (drained and rinsed)
1 8-oz container sour cream	4 oz sour cream
1/4 cup cottage cheese	3 tbs. cottage cheese
1/2 lb grated cheddar cheese	1/4 lb grated sharp cheddar cheese

Yields: 8 servings (cut 9" x 13" pan 4" x 2")

Prepare noodles according to package directions. Drain in colander, rinse with cold water and set aside. Brown chicken (and sauté celery until tender in modified recipe). Add seasonings, tomato paste, one tomato-paste can of water and mushrooms. Place noodles in large bowl; mix in sour cream and cottage cheese. Line bottom of 9" x 13" baking dish with noodle mixture. Top with ground chicken mixture. Sprinkle cheddar cheese on top. Bake at 350, until cheese melts and casserole is heated through.

National Renal Diet Exchanges: (per serving)

	Original Recipe	Modified - Reg. Pasta	Modified - Low Protein Pasta
Meats	4	2	2
Starch	2	2	0*
Vegetables	1	1	1
Fats	2	1	2
Protein	33 grams	19 grams	15 grams

(\* High Calorie - 2)

## What if I have other questions?

Ask your doctor to refer you to a kidney dietitian who specializes in diets for kidney patients. You may also be interested in other National Kidney Foundation publications. For more information about publications available on nutrition and other topics, contact the National Kidney Foundation at (800) 622-9010 or visit our Web site at [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org).

**Read more about [Enjoy Your Own Recipes Using Less Protein.](#)**

The National Kidney Foundation wishes to thank its Council on Renal Nutrition (CRN) for the development of this fact sheet.

If you would like more information, please [contact us](#).

© 2015 National Kidney Foundation. All rights reserved. This material does not constitute medical advice. It is intended for informational purposes only. Please consult a physician for specific treatment recommendations.

The information shared on our websites is information developed solely from internal experts on the subject matter, including medical advisory boards, who have developed guidelines for our patient content. This material does not constitute medical advice. It is intended for informational purposes only. No one associated with the National Kidney Foundation will answer medical questions via e-mail. Please consult a physician for specific treatment recommendations.