

Choosing Kidney-Friendly Drinks: Phosphorus and Potassium

Phosphorus and potassium are minerals found in many foods and drinks. Your body needs some of each, but people with kidney disease may need to limit them. Too much phosphorus or potassium can build up in the blood when the kidneys are not able to remove enough. Choosing drinks carefully can help keep your levels in a safer range.

Why Phosphorus Matters

Phosphorus may be added to some drinks to improve flavor, color, or shelf life. It is often found in dark colas and some processed drinks. Look for words with “phos” on the ingredient list, such as phosphoric acid or phosphate. If you see these words, that drink may not be the best choice for a kidney-friendly diet.

Why Potassium Matters

Potassium is found naturally in many fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods. It may also be added to sports drinks, electrolyte drinks, and some flavored waters. If your care team has told you to limit potassium, check labels and avoid drinks that list potassium chloride, potassium citrate, or other potassium ingredients.

Good Drink Choices to Consider

Water is usually the best choice. If plain water is hard to drink, try sparkling water or flavorings that do not list phosphorus or potassium ingredients. Always check the label because ingredients can change.

Sparkling water options:

- Sparkling Ice flavored varieties
- Spindrift, made with real fruit juice
- San Pellegrino or Perrier natural sparkling mineral waters

Water flavorings to consider:

- Stur Liquid Water Enhancer, such as tropical punch, strawberry watermelon, or lemonade
- MiO Liquid Water Enhancer, such as berry flavors
- Sweet Leaf Liquid Stevia Drops, such as vanilla crème or coconut
- True Citrus Water Flavor Packets, such as lemon, lime, orange, or grapefruit

Herbal teas

Herbal teas such as chamomile, peppermint, and rooibos can be a good way to add flavor. Many herbal teas do not have caffeine.

Always check the label. Choose teas without added phosphorus, potassium, or other minerals your care team told you to limit.

Takeaway

Choose drinks that fit your kidney diet. Water, some sparkling waters, simple water flavorings, and some herbal teas may be good choices. Check labels often and ask your dietitian if you are not sure.

Rethink that DRINK!

For people on dialysis, choosing the right low-sugar beverages is essential to manage fluid balance, control blood pressure, and avoid excess potassium, phosphorus, and sodium. Here are **some** of the best low-sugar beverage options that are generally considered safe for dialysis patients:

Kidney-Friendly Low-Sugar Beverages

1. Water (Plain or Infused)

- ◇ Best hydration option.
- ◇ Try infusing with cucumber, mint, or a splash of lemon (if potassium levels allow) for flavor

2. Unsweetened Apple Juice

- ◇ Low in potassium and phosphorus.
- ◇ Choose 100% juice with no added sugars

3. Unsweetened Cranberry Juice

- ◇ Supports urinary tract health.
- ◇ Low in potassium and phosphorus, but still check labels

4. Herbal Teas (Caffeine-Free)

- ◇ Chamomile, peppermint, or rooibos are good options.
- ◇ Avoid teas with licorice root or high potassium content

5. Plant-Based Milks (Unsweetened)

- ◇ Almond or rice milk are often lower in potassium and phosphorus than dairy.
- ◇ Always check for added phosphate or potassium additives

6. Low-Sodium Broths

- ◇ Can be hydrating and comforting.
- ◇ Choose low-sodium or no-salt-added varieties

7. Some Flavored Waters (Check Labels)

- ◇ Look for options without added potassium, phosphorus, or artificial sweeteners.
- ◇ Some Bai waters may be okay, but always read the ingredient list



Beverages to Avoid or Limit

- **Dark sodas** (often contain phosphorus additives)
- **Coconut water** (high in potassium)
- **Citrus juices** (like orange or grapefruit—high in potassium)
- **Vitamin waters** (often contain added potassium/phosphorus)
- **Energy drinks and sports drinks** (high in sugar and electrolytes)



Remember, most individuals on dialysis need to limit their fluids but also do need to ensure enough fluids are drank throughout the day. Please consult with your dietitian about any specific questions regarding fluids and dialysis.

Beat the Heat, Keep Your Seat: Summer Safety and Dialysis Attendance

Summer can be a fun time of year, but hot weather can be challenging for people on dialysis. Heat, humidity, sweating, transportation problems, and changes in routine can make it harder to manage fluids and get to every treatment. Staying safe in the summer means planning ahead, keeping cool, and making dialysis attendance a top priority.

Why Summer Heat Matters

People on dialysis may be more sensitive to extreme heat because the body has a harder time balancing fluid. Hot weather can increase thirst, make blood pressure harder to manage, and raise the risk of feeling weak, dizzy, or overheated. For many patients, drinking extra fluids is not a simple solution because too much fluid between treatments can lead to swelling, shortness of breath, high blood pressure, cramping, or extra strain on the heart.

Keep Your Seat: Do Not Skip Dialysis

Dialysis treatments are especially important during the summer. Skipping or shortening treatment can allow extra fluid and toxins to build up, which may make heat-related symptoms worse. If you are having trouble getting to treatment because of heat, storms, transportation issues, illness, or a change in plans, call your dialysis clinic as soon as possible. The team may be able to help problem-solve before a missed treatment becomes an emergency.

Smart Ways to Stay Cool

- Stay indoors or in shaded areas during the hottest part of the day.
- Wear light, loose-fitting clothing and use a hat or umbrella when outside.
- Use fans, air conditioning, cool washcloths, or a misting bottle to help lower body temperature.
- Plan errands, walks, and appointments in the morning or evening when possible.

Ask family, friends, neighbors, or community resources for help getting to a cooler place if your home becomes too hot.



Managing Thirst Without Overdoing Fluids

Always follow the fluid plan given by your dialysis team. If you feel extra thirsty in the summer, talk with your nurse or dietitian instead of increasing fluids on your own. Helpful strategies may include using smaller cups, spreading fluids throughout the day, limiting salty foods, chewing sugar-free gum, sucking on sugar-free hard candy, rinsing your mouth, or enjoying approved cold snacks such as frozen grapes or ice chips counted toward your fluid allowance.

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Plan Ahead for Transportation

Summer weather can affect rides. Heat, storms, road construction, and holiday schedules may cause delays. Confirm rides early, keep your phone charged, and have a backup plan when possible. If your ride is late or canceled, call the clinic right away. Do not assume you have to miss treatment.

Know When to Ask for Help

Call your dialysis clinic or healthcare provider if you notice unusual swelling, shortness of breath, dizziness, weakness, muscle cramps, very low or high blood pressure, fever, vomiting, or trouble following your fluid plan. Call emergency services right away for confusion, fainting, chest pain, severe shortness of breath, or signs of heat stroke.

Summer Dialysis Safety Checklist

- I know my dialysis schedule and have confirmed my transportation.
- I have a backup ride plan if my usual ride falls through.
- I am following my fluid and sodium limits.
- I know how to stay cool at home and when I am outside.
- I have my clinic phone number saved and easy to find.

I know when to call the clinic, my doctor, or emergency services.

Final Reminder

Beating the heat does not mean taking risks with your treatment. Keep cool, keep your plan, and keep your dialysis seat. If summer weather or life changes make it harder to attend treatment, speak up early so your care team can help.



My care team information:

Dialysis Center:
Phone number:
Social Worker:
Dietician:



Stay Safe in Extreme Heat

The month of August in eastern Nebraska remains one of the hottest months of the summer and even into September. Knowing we can still experience plenty of hot summer days this month and next month, now is a good time to review how to stay safe in extreme heat, especially when we are longing for cooler days ahead.

Local TV and radio stations and social media sites will inform us when extreme heat is forecasted. Extreme heat warnings mean the temperature will be much hotter than normal with the possibility of higher humidity as well. When we experience extreme heat, our bodies work extra hard to keep a normal temperature. We are at higher risk for having heat-related illnesses when our bodies cannot keep a normal temperature. The best ways to protect ourselves during extreme heat are to stay cool and hydrated, and stay informed by listening to weather updates about the heat.

Be Prepared

Being prepared for extreme heat includes preparing yourself, family, home, and pets. Keep your medications, some water and food together in a convenient place to take with you in case you need to leave your home and seek shelter in a cooler location. Become familiar with resources available to adults in Lincoln that might be appropriate for you. For example, Aging Partners distributes fans to adults age 60 and older. Call (402) 441-8815 to learn more about this option. Other steps to take in preparing your home include installing a window air conditioner and placing insulation around it to help keep the heat out. You may also place window stripping around doors and windows. Cover windows with drapes, shades, blankets, or sheets to help keep the heat out of your home. Help keep your pets cool too by making sure they have plenty of fresh, cool water to drink, and shade to be in during hot summer days. Plan to bring your pets indoors if the temperatures get too hot outside and it is cooler inside.

Symptoms and Treatment of Heat-related Illnesses

There are different types of heat-related illnesses that can happen when the body is not able to cool itself appropriately. Our bodies naturally cool themselves by sweating. In extreme heat; however, our body temperature can rise faster than our body temperature can cool down. This can cause heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or heat stroke.

Heat cramps can occur when doing intense exercise or physical activity that causes heavy sweating with muscle pain or spasm. If this happens, then stop exercising, move to a cool place, drink water or a cool drink, and wait for the cramps to go away before doing any more physical activity. **Get medical attention if the cramps last longer than 1 hour.** The extended cramping may be due to loss of electrolytes like sodium or potassium. Adults on a low sodium diet or who have heart conditions can experience muscle cramps lasting longer than an hour. Seek medical attention if this happens.

Signs and symptoms of **heart exhaustion** may include heavy sweating, feeling cool, looking pale, having clammy skin (when the skin feels cool and damp), having a fast heart rate that is weak (harder to feel), having muscle cramps, feeling nauseated, tired, weak, dizzy (maybe even passing out), throwing up and/or having a headache. This is a long list! Not all of the symptoms in the list need to be present to have heat exhaustion. If you are feeling any of these symptoms during extreme heat, move to a cool place, sip water, loosen your clothes, or put cool wet clothes on. You may also take a cool bath to help lower your body temperature.

Get medical attention if you are throwing up, your symptoms get worse, or your symptoms last longer than 1 hour.

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. This can happen when the body temperature is high (103 degrees or higher). The skin is red, feels hot, dry or damp. The heart rate feels fast and strong, having a headache may happen too, along with feeling dizzy, nauseated, confused or even passing out. **If able, call 911 and get medical attention right away. Heat stroke is a medical emergency!** If you see someone who passed out from heat stroke or extreme heat, call 911. Lower the person's body temperature by applying cool cloths to the person's forehead, neck, and other exposed skin (arms, wrists, hands, and/or legs). Do not give a person who passed out any fluids to drink. He/she will most likely receive IV hydration by the medical emergency personnel.

**See the two infographics attached to this article to learn more about signs & symptoms of heat illness and staying safe in extreme heat. They are part of the Lincoln-Lancaster Heat Response Plan. You can access the report to read in full from this a link or from the link in the references. <https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/5/health-dept/heat/linclanccoheatresponseplan.pdf>*

Stay Safe

Stay as cool as possible during extreme heat by wearing loose, light-colored clothing. Try to limit outdoor activity as much as possible. Rest frequently in shaded areas if you need to be outdoor in extreme heat. Find air conditioned places to cool off if you are too hot in your home. Lincoln has many cooling centers that are available to help you cool off during the day.

Cooling centers in Lincoln include:

- ♦ Lincoln City Libraries
- ♦ Recreation centers in Lincoln
- ♦ Aging Partners Victory Park Senior Center: (402) 441-7070
- ♦ Catholic Social Services: (402) 474-1600
- ♦ Community Action Partnership: (402) 471-4515
- ♦ Grace Chapel: (402) 484-8555
- ♦ Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach: (402) 477-4116
- ♦ People's City Mission: (402) 475-1303 (overnight shelter)
- ♦ The Bridge Connect: (402) 477-3951
- ♦ The Salvation Army: (402) 474-6263
- ♦ F Street Community Center: (402) 441-7951

Access this link to learn more about the times the cooling centers open and close and their locations: <https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/Departments/Health-Department/Heat/Cooling-Centers> or call Maizie Humm at the Lincoln-Lancaster Health Department @ (402) 441-8011 to learn more about the cooling centers.

Stay informed about rising temperatures by listening to local weather reports to learn about extreme heat during the summer and early fall days. The Lincoln-Lancaster Health Department makes timely announcements on the radio, TV, and social media about extreme heat and steps to take to protect yourself, family, and pets.

Staying hydrated is an important step to take during extreme heat. Talk with your DCL team if you are on a fluid restriction. Your DCL team will help you problem-solve and make a plan on how to stay hydrated during extreme heat days.

References:

City of Lincoln: Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird (2026): Stay Safe in Extreme Heat. <https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/Departments/Health-Department/Heat>

Lincoln-Lancaster County Heat Response Plan (n.d).

<https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/5/health-dept/heat/linclanccoheatresponseplan.pdf>