

Diet Corner - August 2017

Potassium is a nutrient that you are probably very familiar with but what about **phosphate**? How many of you ask about your phosphate levels when you are with your doctor, dietitian, or nurse? Your phosphate level is monitored because if it stays too high for too long it can cause itching, and affect your bones and blood vessels. Remember to ask your healthcare professional about your phosphate level so that you know what your levels are to allow you to take control over how to manage your phosphate. Now let's look a bit closer at where phosphate is in our food...

Fresh is best

Phosphate is found in processed and packaged foods (such as ham, bacon, salami, sausages, hamburgers, 'ready-meals', instant sauces/foods, baked goods, and cheese), and dark fizzy drinks. Processed and packaged foods can contain **phosphate additives** (shown in table 1) which you can see listed on food labels; so, pick up your food packets and have a look at which additives you can spot. The phosphate in processed and packaged foods is more easily absorbed so it will cause your phosphate levels in your blood to go higher.

Table 1 Phosphate additives used in processed foods

E Number	Phosphate additives
E338	Phosphoric Acid
E339	Sodium phosphates
E340	Potassium phosphates
E341	Calcium phosphates
E343	Magnesium phosphates
E450	Diphosphates
E451	Triphosphates
E452	Polyphosphates
E541	Sodium aluminium phosphates

You may also know that phosphate is found in foods from animals (such as offal, meat, fish, eggs, dairy), as well as in nuts and beans, but this phosphate is not as easily absorbed as that in processed foods.

The best way to avoid having too much phosphate in your diet is to cut down on the amount of processed and packaged foods you eat, and try to **cook your food from fresh ingredients**.

You may not feel confident in making your own meals from scratch, or even have the time, but it would be a great thing to try and do. Maybe ask your friends and family for help and advice on how to make your favourite 'take-away' meal, or

even look for local cooking classes to give you some extra tips and confidence in making your own meals, or modify recipes from cookbooks. You could then show off and invite your friends over for a dinner party!

Some other foods which are low in phosphate are fruits and vegetables which you can have as a snack, but mind that potassium! You could also try having cream cheese, lemonade, popcorn, and plain biscuits instead of other snacks to reduce the amount of phosphate you have in your food.

Medication

You may have also been given tablets to help manage your phosphate levels, which are known as **phosphate binders**. Phosphate binders work by joining with the phosphate in your food so less is absorbed into the bloodstream. It is really important that you take the phosphate binders with meals and snacks to make sure they work properly; otherwise you are taking all this medication for no benefit. Common phosphate binders include: **Renvela** (sevelamer carbonate), **Renagel** (sevelamer hydrochloride), **Renacet** (calcium acetate), **Calcichew** (calcium carbonate), **Fosrenol** (lanthanum carbonate).