



Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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Q: What can I eat if I go to a restaurant or someone's house?

A: When you cook and eat at home, you know what's in your meal. But it's fun to eat out at a restaurant or with friends—and you can make this work, with a little extra thought.

If you can, plan ahead where you want to go and think about what you'd like to have. Many eating places post their menus outside or on the Internet. That gives you a chance to choose what you want in advance. To eat a dialysis-friendly meal at a restaurant:

- “Save up” your potassium and phosphorus for the day so you can have a treat.
- Ask for sauces or dressings on the side so you can add what you want.
- Ask for a glass of ice only, and no refills on your water glass.
- Avoid salty foods like deli meats, hot dogs, bottled sauces, chips, crackers, and other snack foods.
- Most fast food is very salty. In general, sub sandwiches (choose chicken or turkey—avoid salamis and bolognas) and salads can be better than burgers or chicken sandwiches.
- Keep an eye on portion size. Restaurant portions can be very big.
- Avoid potatoes when you eat out, especially if your potassium runs high. Go for rice or noodles for your starches.

- Take your binders with you so you can take them after you eat.

When you plan to eat at a friend's house, ask what's on the menu so you can talk with your dietitian or look up the food content of menu items. This way you'll know which things you can enjoy freely and which things you need to limit.

If your friend asks what you can eat, share your diet lists. It's even more important that your friend knows your diet if you'll be staying at his/her house for many meals. Your friends and family want to do what they can to help keep you healthy.

What *I* can do to eat out and stay healthy:

- Learn my meal plan so I can make good choices away from home.
- Ask my dietitian to help me choose wisely.
- Find a pocket-sized diet guide to help me know what's in restaurant food.
- Ask for what I want—restaurant staff are there to help me.
- Call the National Kidney Foundation at (800) 622-9010 for the brochure *Dining Out with Confidence*, or download it from the Internet at www.kidney.org.
- Visit module 9 of Kidney School™: *Nutrition and Fluids* at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more.