**Diet myth buster: Rock salt is better for kidney patients.**

All types of salt including Rock, Table, Garlic and Sea can contribute to increasing your blood pressure, formation of kidney stones and making you thirsty if you are on a fluid restriction. Your taste buds will adjust quickly to reducing your salt intake and flavour can be achieved through using pepper, herbs, spices and lemon juice instead of salt. It’s also worth mentioning that kidney patients should avoid low salt alternatives because they contain potassium.

**Diet myth buster: Decaffeinated coffee is ok on a renal diet.**

Unfortunately if you need to watch the potassium content of your diet then there is no difference between the potassium content of caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee. On a low potassium diet you can enjoy one cup of coffee daily.

**Diet myth buster: Skimmed milk is better for kidney patients.**

Cow’s milk is a good source of both potassium and phosphate. Semi skimmed and skimmed milk contain the same amount of potassium and phosphate as whole milk (the only difference is the fat content) Lower potassium and phosphate options include rice, oat and some soya milks. Often people with kidney problems need plenty calories to meet their nutritional requirements so you may be advised to use full fat milk rather than skimmed versions; the advice varies between individuals according to needs.

**Diet myth buster: Ice cubes are a good way of quenching thirst.**

They can be, as they are low volume compared to a larger drink but remember they are fluid and should be counted in your allowance usually as 30 or 40mls depending on the size of your ice cube tray. Other foods to remember to count as fluid include sauces, gravies, ice cream, yoghurts, and jelly.

**Diet myth buster: Diet can’t help to protect kidneys.**

In the earlier stages of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) you may be able to slow the disease progression (slow the decline in your kidney function) by having a healthy diet which is lower in salt and protein. If you are overweight achieving a healthy weight and if you have diabetes keeping your blood sugar levels well controlled will also be helpful. Throughout the various stages of CKD, diet and nutrition are an important part of your treatment. Optimising nutrition can help prevent nutrition related complications and also give you a better quality of life.

**Diet myth buster: Eating a low potassium diet will improve my kidney function.**

Sadly eating a low potassium diet will not improve your kidney function, it can however, help to lower the potassium level in your blood, which is still an important part of staying safe and well. When your kidney function starts to decline, you are less able to remove waste from the blood, and this waste can start to build-up in the blood. Potassium is part of this waste. Although potassium is an important mineral that is needed by the body, when levels get too high it can cause problems with your heart, hence the need for a low potassium diet.

So, in summary, there is no benefit to your kidney function and you should only follow a low potassium diet if you have been advised to do so.

**Diet myth buster: Switching to a white bread from wholemeal will be better for my potassium and phosphate levels.**

We see so many people that have changed from wholemeal bread to white bread based on this old and out-dated advice. On paper, white bread is lower in potassium and phosphate, when compared to wholemeal bread. However, the way these breads behave in the body is what really matters. I will attempt to explain…

**Potassium**: White bread is much lower in fibre than wholemeal bread; fibre helps to keep our bowels moving. Keeping our bowels moving is an important part of lowering potassium as we are able to lose potassium via the bowel. In addition to this, for those with diabetes, fibre can help to stabilise blood sugars. When blood sugars are high this can also cause high potassium! So, please enjoy your wholemeal bread while eating a low potassium diet.

**Phosphate:** With regards to phosphate and wholemeal bread (wholemeal anything…pasta, rice, crackers etc), the easy explanation is that not all phosphates are created equally! For example there are forms of phosphate that are added to processed foods or cola style drinks, this type of phosphate is very easy for your body to absorb, up to 100%. Meanwhile, up to 80% of the phosphate you find in meat, fish, eggs and diary is absorbed by the body. However, only 10-30% of the phosphate found in wholemeal breads (or other wholemeal foods) is absorbed by the body. So, please enjoy wholemeal bread and foods as part of your diet.

**Exercise myth buster: I’m already tired, exercise will only make me more tired**

Many people with renal failure say they are too tired to exercise. They think if they exercise it will make them more tired. The fact is, even a little bit of exercise, 15-20 minutes a day, will actually help you feel LESS tired. Start slowly and do what you can – you aren’t aiming to become a marathon runner. As long as you keep doing it regularly (at least 3-4 times a week), you will gradually get stronger and able to do more and more.

**Exercise myth buster: I need expensive equipment to exercise at home**

Everyday items around the house can be used, food tins as weights and milk bottles filled up with water. Even a chair can be used to do chair squats or seated exercises, or a stair step to do step ups. Also, remember that housework and gardening are also forms of exercise. Maintaining proper technique is important doing resistance exercises, there are many free resources online to help you with this and other forms of physical activity, including those on the following websites NHS live well, Kidney Care UK and the National Kidney Federation.