

Nutri-Notes

## KIDNEY HEALTH

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Your kidneys are hard workers and you should treat them nicely. This means lots of fluids and watching the sodium. These fist-shaped organs shaped like... well, kidneys (where do you think kidney beans got their name?) are real powerhouses. They know how to keep what your body needs and gets rid of the rest of the unnecessary stuff. Without well-running kidneys, your body does not have a way to rinse away the unusable leftovers from digestion, keep fluid levels where they should be or maintain the right amount of potassium, sodium and other important minerals. Pretty important stuff!

Fortunately, kidneys were designed to have a lot of reserve. Even if sixty per cent of a kidney is destroyed, it can still function reasonably well. Symptoms usually don't show until kidney function is down to 30%. Some people are borne with only one functioning kidney, some lose a kidney to disease or injury and some people chose to donate a kidney to help someone in need. Mother Nature was really thinking when she designed the kidney.

E.coli is responsible for many urinary tract infections (estimated 8-10 million per year in the US). Urinary tract infections can eventually damage kidneys. There are natural ingredients in cranberries that stop the growth of e. coli. It's not been established if cranberry juice or other cranberry products truly enhance kidney and bladder health. However, fluids are very important for keeping the kidneys and bladders happy and cranberry juice is definitely high in Vitamin C- a proven good thing!

Just about any kind of fluid will make your kidneys smile EXCEPT those with excessive sugar, salt or caffeine. Sugar can encourage the growth of bacteria in the bladder. The kidneys must filter salt, so the more you take in over what you need every day, the harder your kidneys have to work. Caffeine really plays a number on your circulatory system, and encourages your body to get rid of fluid it really needs. You can drink quarts of fluid, in the form of coffee or iced tea, and wind up dehydrated, due to the caffeine. So, go easy on the coffee, tea, soft drinks and sports drinks (a little is okay, just take it easy) and think: fresh, refreshing fruit juices (blueberry ginger lemonade and iced passion fruit herbal tea come to mind) and clear, sparkling water.

Here are some fluid ideas:

1. Water ( yes, water)- iced, with a twist of lemon, lime, orange or tangerine, sparkling, flavored
2. Fruit juice- blended with yogurt or nonfat milk, mixed with sparkling water, frozen and served as slush. Try blending fresh watermelon and adding it to lemonade or mix orange juice, apricot nectar and mango nectar together for a refreshing beverage. Freeze white grape juice in ice cube trays and serve in a tall glass of cranberry juice.
3. Herbal and decaffeinated teas: try iced green tea with a twist of ginger, hot green tea with lemon and mint, hibiscus tea with orange slices, herbal tea blends mixed with clove and nutmeg.

Some forms of kidney disease can be controlled with a carefully planned diet. This is a diet with limited amounts of protein, sodium, potassium and fluids. These nutrients are processed by the kidneys. By limiting them, you make life easier for the diseased or damaged kidney. Healthy people do not benefit from limiting these nutrients, so don't consider this as a "preventative." Watch your health, have regular check-ups, get lots of rest and exercise, don't smoke, and drink lots of healthy things and your kidneys will be good to you.

## RECIPE

Cranberry in a Cup  
makes 1 serving

1 cup chilled cranberry juice  
½ medium sliced banana one half  
¼ cup fresh or frozen, thawed raspberries one fourth  
¼ cup plain yogurt or soft tofu one fourth  
½ teaspoon fresh orange or lemon zest one half  
2 teaspoons orange juice concentrate  
½ cup crushed ice one half

Place all ingredients in a blender. Process until smooth and combined. Serve chilled.

Note: You can use regular, low-fat or non-fat yogurt in this recipe. Orange juice concentrate can be scooped, frozen, from a container of frozen juice concentrate.

## Side Bar: Kidney Quiz

Courtesy of the National Kidney Foundation

1. True or False: When uncontrolled, very high blood pressure is up to twice as likely to result in kidney disease
2. About 5-30 % of diabetes patients will eventually have kidney failure.
3. One of the six warning signs of kidney failure is puffiness around the eyes.
4. Kidneys help stimulate white blood cell production.
5. Kidneys are the size of your fist and are shaped like kidney beans
6. A person can only live with two kidneys.

Answer Key: 1. F 2. T 3. T 4. F 5. T 6. F

## Side Bar: Foods High in Potassium\*

The following have 300 or more milligrams of potassium per serving:  
8 ounces whole, lowfat, nonfat and buttermilk  
3 ounces cooked beef, liver, pork, canned salmon, chicken and veal  
4 ounces dried apricots, raisins, and prunes, 1 medium banana, ½ small cantaloupe or honeydew, 2 ounces dried dates and figs, fresh peaches and apricots, ½ medium avocado

4 ounces cooked beans  
10 fresh mushrooms  
3 Tablespoons peanut butter  
1 baked potato  
1 baked sweet potato  
1 medium tomato  
6 ounces canned tomato juice  
1 cup cold all-bran cereal

\* this information can be used in two ways; to increase the amount of potassium in a healthy person's diet or to decrease the amount of potassium in a renally-impaired person's diet.