

Southern Indiana Nephrology and Hypertension

Phosphorus

Phosphorus is a mineral that **makes up about 85% of your bones**. The phosphorus your bones don't need is washed out of your blood by the kidneys in your urine. However, people who have chronic kidney disease may have an abnormal amount of phosphorus left in the bloodstream. This happens because the kidneys no longer clean the blood well.

Hyperphosphatemia, (high levels of phosphorus in the blood), is **controlled by diet, and taking binders**. High phosphorus **affects blood vessels, the heart, lungs and skin and will lead to hardening of these tissues, called calcification**. Calcified organs and tissues become diseased and may fail, causing early death. Diseased bones may fail and break, become painful with arthritis or stop making enough red blood cells. In one study from the American Journal of Nephrology, patients who control phosphorus reduce their risk of death by 25 to 30 percent.

Phosphorus is **in almost every food**, some foods more than others. Dark colored colas, dairy products, high protein foods, nuts, and beans are high in phosphorus. Some **lower phosphorus foods and drinks** include ginger ale, grape soda, lemon lime soda, root beer, whipped topping, and soft cheese like Brie, Cream Cheese and Feta. Good snacks are unsalted popcorn, pretzels, sherbet, sorbet and frozen fruit pops.

A normal phosphorus level is between 3.5 and 5.5. If your lab is higher than 5.5 your doctor may start you on a medicine called a '**phosphorus binder**' to help get the level back to normal. There are different types of binders: pills, powders, and chewable. They have to be taken *as directed*, usually either during or right after a meal in order to work. The binder acts like a sponge or magnet and keeps the phosphorus from getting into your bloodstream. Your body then eliminates it through the bowels.

We want to help you **keep your bones (and the rest of your body) healthy!** Please, let your doctor know if you have a problem taking your phosphorus binder so we can find one that is the easier for you to take, or if you cannot afford your phosphorus binder. There are assistance programs that may help cover the cost of your medications.