

Understanding the impact of high phosphorus



What is phosphorus?

Phosphorus is a mineral that helps keep many parts of your body healthy. It works with calcium and vitamin D to build strong bones. The phosphorus in your body comes from your diet. It is found naturally, or as an additive, in many of the foods you eat and beverages you drink.



How does chronic kidney disease affect your phosphorus level?

When you have chronic kidney disease, it's harder for your kidneys to remove extra phosphorus from your blood. Over time, too much phosphorus from what you eat and drink can build up in your body and cause your phosphorus level to go up.



What are the long-term effects of having a high phosphorus level?

The levels of phosphorus, calcium, and vitamin D in your body must be in balance to keep your bones healthy. If your phosphorus level is too high, your body will try to restore this balance by pulling calcium out of your bones. Eventually, this can make your bones weak, and cause calcium to build up in your blood vessels.

Symptoms and long-term effects of high phosphorus in the blood

▾ Symptoms ▾ Long-term effects



Red eyes



Muscle cramps or pain



Joint pain and stiffness, often in the hands and feet



Itchy skin



Heart attack and stroke



Bones that are weak or break easily

You can have a high phosphorus level and not feel any symptoms.



Tell your healthcare team if you have any concerns about your phosphorus level.

Take charge of your phosphorus level

Follow the 3Ds

Diet, dialysis, and drug therapy all work together to prevent extra phosphorus from building up in your body.



Diet

- Eat fresh foods and cook homemade meals
- Check for hidden phosphorus in processed foods and drinks by looking for the letters “PHOS” in the ingredients list on food labels
- Ask your healthcare team how much phosphorus you should eat and drink daily, and work together to create a meal plan that works for you



Dialysis

- Dialysis filters out some, but not all, dietary phosphorus
- Keep every dialysis appointment and stay for the entire time



Drug Therapy

- A phosphate binder may be prescribed when diet and dialysis treatments are not enough to control your phosphorus level
- Phosphate binders work like a magnet to pull extra phosphorus out of the food you eat to prevent it from building up in your body. That’s why it’s important to take your phosphate binder with every meal



Talk to your healthcare team to find out if a stronger phosphate binder could help you meet your phosphorus goal.