

Do I need to worry about potassium?

As important as it is, we really don't talk enough about potassium, a mineral that is necessary for the normal functioning of all cells.

All cells?

Yes, all cells.

It regulates the heartbeat, ensures proper function of the muscles and nerves, and is essential in the digestive process for synthesizing protein and metabolizing carbohydrates.

Thousands of years ago, when humans roamed the earth gathering and hunting, potassium was abundant in the diet. Today, most Americans get barely half of the recommended amount of potassium they need.

Why?

Because of all the salt in processed and prepared foods.

The average American diet contains about twice as much sodium as potassium. This imbalance may be a major contributor to high blood pressure. Most adults need around 4,700 mg of potassium daily. (If you have kidney disease, talk to your doctor about safe amounts to ingest for you).

What can you do about it?

Like so many other deficiencies, low levels of potassium can be resolved by eating a healthy, balanced, fresh diet without artificial additives.

Foods that are high in potassium include potatoes, tomatoes, beans, spinach and other dark green, leafy vegetables, artichokes, fish, meat, some beans, mushrooms, avocados, and bananas.

Other fruits like prunes, apricots, papayas, mangos, peaches, melons, and oranges as well as starchy vegetables including all types of squash also contain ample amounts of potassium.

These are all delicious foods that can mostly be eaten fresh or with some simple cooking. Start out slowly by adding fresh fruits and vegetables to your diet. Salads are easy and can be packed for on-the-go eating.

Once you try it for a while and start feeling so much better, it becomes easier to continue taking steps toward a healthier you!