

EXTENSION CONNECTION - Potassium in the Diet

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Q. What is Potassium's function?

- A.** Potassium is a mineral that helps regulate fluids and mineral balance and is needed for muscle contractions and transmission of nerve impulses. It also helps regulate blood pressure; an important role considering one in five Americans is living with hypertension.

Potassium plays such an important role in blood pressure regulation and stroke prevention that the Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of the health claim "diets containing foods that are good sources of potassium and low in sodium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure and stroke," for foods that are naturally low in sodium, fat, and cholesterol, and provide at least 350mg of potassium per serving.

Q. What are the effects of Potassium deficiency?

- A.** Potassium deficiency can result in high blood pressure, stroke, congestive heart failure, cardiac arrhythmias, weakness, depression and glucose intolerance, as well as increased risk of kidney stones, and increased bone detention.

Q. What foods provide Potassium?

- A.** Milk, fruits and vegetables provide most of the potassium in the American Diet. An 8oz serving of milk provides about 350-400mg of potassium. Three to four servings of milk a day provides 1050-1600mg of potassium, up to a third of the potassium recommendation. Other common sources of potassium include: a medium baked potato w/skin provides 610mg, 8oz of yogurt provides 490mg, a 6-inch banana provides 362mg and an orange provides 174mg.

Call me at the Webster County Extension Office, 515-576-2119, or E-mail pgilbert@iastate.edu, with your nutrition and health questions. You may also call our toll-free ISU Answerline at 1-800-262-3804 or visit the Webster County Extension web site: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/webster>.