

## Phosphorus

### What is phosphorus?

Phosphorus is a mineral in your body that is measured in your blood. It is important for maintaining your body's acid-base balance and helps preserve teeth and bone strength.

### What makes phosphorus levels too high or low?

The normal range for phosphorus is 2.5 – 4.5 mg/dL for adults and 4.5-6.5 mg/dL for young children. Your phosphorous level was \_\_\_\_\_ mg/dL on \_\_\_\_\_.

Low blood phosphorus levels may be due to many factors including:

- Certain chemotherapies and medications, including steroids
- Poor oral intake
- Diarrhea
- Long term use of antacids
- Vitamin D deficiency

High blood phosphorus levels may be due to many factors including:

- Poor kidney function
- Tumor lysis syndrome



### What can I do to correct my phosphorus level?

Phosphorus needs vary from person to person. Your daily estimated phosphorus need is \_\_\_\_\_ mg. The guidelines below can help you make food choices to best meet your goals.

- Your phosphorus level is low, **include at least one food from the high phosphorus list at each meal and snack.** This will help to increase the phosphorus level in your blood.
- Your phosphorus level is high. **Avoid/limit foods from the high phosphorus list.**

### Maximize phosphorus intake with small servings

Some foods contain more phosphorus in a smaller portion. If your serving sizes are limited, these foods may have a greater impact on your phosphorus level:

- Beef
- Milk
- Cheese
- Fish (esp. salmon)
- Yogurt

High phosphorus foods			
Dairy		Meat	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheese</li> <li>• Custard</li> <li>• Ice cream</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk</li> <li>• Yogurt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beef</li> <li>• Chicken</li> <li>• Eggs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish</li> <li>• Pork</li> </ul>
Beans and legumes		Nuts and seeds	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black beans</li> <li>• Kidney beans</li> <li>• Lentils</li> <li>• Navy beans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pinto beans</li> <li>• Soybeans</li> <li>• Split peas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almonds</li> <li>• Cashews</li> <li>• Nut butters</li> <li>• Peanuts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pecans</li> <li>• Sunflower seeds</li> <li>• Pumpkin seeds</li> <li>• Walnuts</li> </ul>
Other		Grains	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brewer's yeast*</li> <li>• Cocoa powder</li> <li>• Chocolate</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bran cereals</li> <li>• Wheat bran, wheat germ*</li> <li>• Whole grain breads</li> <li>• Whole grain or seeded crackers</li> </ul>	

\*Not all the foods on this list are allowed on the Immunosuppressed Patient Diet. If you have questions about foods on this list, please contact your dietitian.

## Supplements

Your doctor may also start you on oral phosphorus supplements when your blood level is low. Follow these tips for the best absorption of supplements:

- Take phosphorus tablets with meals.
- Take separately from other minerals; calcium and magnesium may compete with phosphorus for absorption.
- Taking tablets several times a day may be more effective than once or twice daily.

## Resources

**National Institute of Health, Medline Plus:** [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002424.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002424.htm)

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This education resource was intended to be given as a part of a nutrition consult by an SCCA dietitian. Questions? Ask an SCCA dietitian at [nutrition@seattlecca.org](mailto:nutrition@seattlecca.org).