

# Dining Out for the Dialysis Patient

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Eating out in restaurants can be difficult when you are on dialysis. Some excellent resources are found in the NFK Publication “Dining Out with Confidence.” If you have a favorite restaurant, ask the manager for a copy of the menu to take to your unit dietitian and they can help you make good choices.

## **Italian Food**

Italian restaurants offer a lot of items suitable for the renal diet. The trick here is to ask for the sauce on the side. The red based sauces have potassium and the white sauces are high in phosphorus. You can vary the sauces and the types of pasta to make interesting meals. Pesto sauce is garlic, basil and oil and is a good alternative. Some clam and mussel sauces are not tomato or cream-based and are good choices for seafood lovers.

Salads and breads are great choices here; just ask for no olives and cheese. Remember to ask for the dressing on the side.

It is better to avoid the dishes like lasagna, cannelloni, ravioli and similar items as they contain high sodium, high potassium, and high phosphorus ingredients. Most Italian restaurants also offer some type of grilled chicken as an addition to their pasta dish. Have the chicken, salad and bread for your meal and take the pasta home and have with your own bread and salad for lunch the next day.

## **Asian Restaurants**

These are difficult places to dine because of the high sodium contents. Chinese restaurants are the most difficult because of the large number of mixed dishes with soy, hoisin, and sweet and sour sauces. They all contain salt and/or MSG. Thai foods generally have more spices and less sodium, frequently you can ask for sauces on the side. Japanese restaurants will also serve more spiced foods and cook less with sodium. Try these selections:

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## Chinese

- Egg Rolls
- Dim Sum
- Potstickers
- Steamed Rice
- Stir-fry Vegetable Dishes- without sauces



## Thai

- Beef, chicken or shrimp in kabob-type dishes- ask for sauce on the side
- Spring Rolls
- Steamed Rice
- Pad Thai Noodles- no nuts
- Grilled fish and chicken dishes- again ask for sauces on the side



## Japanese

- Sashimi and sushi- no California rolls with avocado
- Tempura- pass on the dipping sauce, and skip the sweet potato
- Grilled fish or chicken- ask for sauce on the side



*Note: In all Asian restaurants, and in most restaurants, avoid the soups. They are all made from canned or dried stock and have very high sodium content and add extra fluid to your daily allowance. Also, avoid the noodles or dishes cooked in broth- they will be quite salty.*

## CONCLUSION

When you eat out the sodium content will be higher than if you were eating at home. Remember to stay within your nutritional and fluid requirements. Try chewing gum, hard candy, breath sprays, etc. to help control the thirst so that you keep your weight gain to less than 5 percent of your dry weight. Be especially careful of potassium overload if you choose high potassium food. Just have one serving, and only a small portion. A very high potassium meal can lead to potassium overload that can affect your heartbeat. So don't eat tomato sauce, avocado, potato and banana cream pie in the same meal, your heart can't take this much potassium.

Don't hesitate to ask about the ingredients if the dish is unfamiliar to you. Ask your server to find out if they will prepare your food without adding salt. Always remember that you are the customer and enjoy!