

# A LONG WAY TO DELICIOUS!

## THE AMAZING EVOLUTION OF THE KIDNEY DIET

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This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kidney Foundation of Canada. This health charity organization has been working hard to improve the lives of kidney patients by promoting organ transplantation and offering support. In an effort to breathe new life into the kidney diet, the Kidney Foundation founded a website with kidney-friendly recipes and advice: The Kidney Community Kitchen. Their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a good occasion to look back on how kidney diets have changed in the last decades.

### One diet fits all

Some of the earliest diet recommendations for patients with kidney failure come from the 1940s, before dialysis was available. These diets meant no salt, almost no protein, and strictly limited fluids. Here is an example from 1948:

#### Daily intake in acute renal failure (recipe for a soup)

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**Water** 1.5 litres

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**Custard powder** 100g

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**Sugar** 150g

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**Butter** 100g

(source: [www.edren.org](http://www.edren.org) of the Edinburgh Renal Unit, U.K.)

As time went on, the diets remained low in protein and high in fat and sugar (except for those with diabetes) to meet caloric needs. They were extremely unpalatable and difficult to follow. Even with the introduction of dialysis, diets were very challenging and restrictive. Malnutrition was common and satisfaction was very low, which comes as no surprise! Early kidney diet cookbooks were dreary, full of high-fat recipes that relied heavily on added oils, fats, sugars, and non-dairy creamers.

### Better treatments

The biggest changes to kidney diets stem directly from better treatments, including medications and dialysis. The use of phosphate binders has allowed patients to keep phosphate levels under control while still including high-protein foods on a regular basis. Therapies such as nocturnal and short daily hemodialysis have allowed some patients to completely revamp their diets. Some nocturnal dialysis patients have even had to learn how to follow a high phosphorus diet. We can truly say that now, more than ever, there is no standard renal diet!

## Changing food landscape

It's not just the treatment of chronic kidney disease that has changed. In the past 50 years, the Canadian food landscape has undergone a tremendous shift. Back in the 50s, processed and fast foods were new and had not yet turned into everyday foods. And portions were a fraction of what we see now. Today these foods play a much bigger role in the diets of Canadians, with many people turning to these "easy fixes". For kidney patients, processing has also introduced multiple food additives that contribute sodium, phosphorus and potassium in places that we wouldn't expect. Food additives such as sodium phosphate and potassium lactate are now commonly found in seemingly untreated meats. Research has shown us that avoiding some of these food additives is critical in managing high phosphorus levels in the blood. Label reading has become a key part of renal diet teaching and grocery shopping becomes a

challenge for people trying to understand confusing food labels.

## Looking ahead

I see much to be hopeful for when looking at the future of kidney diets. New treatments such as nocturnal and daily dialysis have changed kidney diets considerably. Dietitians and patients are asking food manufacturers and government bodies to include potassium and phosphorus levels on food labels to make label reading easier. There is now a trend to try to make the renal diet fun and interesting with great resources and cookbooks, like **Spice It Up!**

I hear about cooking demonstrations happening across the country with wonderful recipes for anyone to enjoy. Until research finds a way to make these diets unnecessary, we hope that you'll continue to enjoy a great variety of foods and **Spice It Up!**

[www.myspiceitup.ca](http://www.myspiceitup.ca)



For more kidney-friendly recipes refer to the **websites**:

[www.kidneycommunitykitchen.ca](http://www.kidneycommunitykitchen.ca)

