

On a Kidney Diet? Yes, There's an App for That!

By Lynne Sanditen

Every kidney patient – or caregiver tending to a kidney patient's needs – is aware of the dangers of consuming certain nutrients in high proportions: phosphorus, potassium, protein and sodium, to name the most common. But to adhere to a prescribed or suggested renal diet presents challenges:

- When there is no food packaging, what's considered a portion size?
- With prepared, processed or restaurant foods, how do you find vital potassium, protein, phosphorus and sodium amounts beyond the typically listed calorie, fat and carbohydrate counts?
- How do you easily identify nutrients in unfamiliar foods to determine whether they conform to a recommended diet?
- When on the go, without easy access to reference books on the subject, how do you make the right meal or grocery food choices?
- How do you ensure you get a balanced diet that's right for you (or your patient), based on specific physician recommendations?

Fortunately, the same convenient, portable technology that has made email, games, songs, GPS and photos accessible 24/7 has now made it possible for renal patients to address these concerns: your Smart phone.

What's more, you can use your Smart phone to personalize and track your very own kidney diet plan in a daily diary format – so you, your caregiver, physician, nephrologist and others invested in your health and well-being all have instant access to the same, vital information.

How It Works – Easy as 1-2-3

If you're new to iPhone, Blackberry, Android and other Smart phone use, an "app" or application is like a mini computer program designed to run on Smart phones. You can download the KidneyDiet app discussed in this article (more information about how to download is provided below) and open it on your Smart phone for a nominal fee. Updates to the app's data, functionality and features are included in the fee.

Once the app is loaded, it's as easy as 1-2-3 to get started with your personalized plan to kidney health through diet:

1. Enter in your physician's recommended daily allowances of nutrients based on your individual needs. If you don't know the amounts, or if you haven't yet designed a personalized diet with your physician, skip to Step 2.
2. Keep track of the foods you eat daily within the app. The nutrient totals will be automatically tallied every time you add a food for that day. Total consumption can be compared with recommended daily allowances.
3. Use the alphabetical listing of foods to make good choices. Foods with nutrient counts highlighted in red indicate you might want to avoid this food, or consume in small quantities. Always consult your physician for advice.

Because your phone is always with you, it's easy to access and enter information at home, work, while shopping, at the doctor's office, at the dialysis clinic or wherever you might be ... at any time of day.

Other KidneyDiet app features include:

- The ability to select portion size and quantity of portions consumed;
- Accounting for American and metric units;
- Ability to store daily food diaries to determine trends relative to dialysis and blood work results;
- Color coding of nutrients based on whether they are over recommended daily allowances, and general guidelines for kidney diet success;
- Tips for how to measure amounts without measuring instruments at hand.

What's New in Today's Kidney Diets – and How Technology Helps Keep You "In the Know"

Kidney disease is not new, but newer research suggests that diet is playing a more crucial role in controlling the progression of the disease. High blood pressure and diabetes are the two leading causes of kidney disease. Did you know about 74.5 million people in the United States age 20 and older have high blood pressure? And based off data from the 2007 National Diabetes Fact Sheet (the most recent available), 23.6 million people in the U.S. have diabetes. The progression of both of the diseases can be lessened by diet. Patients must focus on balancing nutrients along with watching their intake of fat, cholesterol, carbohydrates and calorie counts for a healthy diet.

This is where technology can make a huge impact. Thanks to Smart phone technology, KidneyDiet takes advantage of the most current data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and presents it in an easy-to-read and understandable format for kidney disease patients - making this complex information not only "fresh" but easily "digestible" for the average kidney disease consumer.

Our understanding of kidney disease is evolving and we all depend on cutting edge technologies to not only track, but share the most current information, in the most effective and efficient way possible. Having dietary information at your fingertips, especially the ability to track liquids consumed, can mean the difference between a good and bad dialysis day. Tools like KidneyDiet are a valuable aid in making healthy choices and discussing results with your doctor.

Take Charge of Your Kidney Health Through a Personalized Diet – Here's How

While technology can't prevent or cure kidney disease, it can provide useful tools to manage something you can control: your diet. And by providing an app that goes beyond presenting general information digitally, to allowing the interactive personalization of one's diet, KidneyDiet is a one-stop shop for everything you need to know to stay healthy for as long as possible.

KidneyDiet is constantly being updated and improved due to input from patients, physicians and caregivers. Please provide us with your feedback at info@kidneydiet.com.

How to find the app, or just get more information:

- To download KidneyDiet app for iPhones, visit the iTunes store or the App Store. or for Android-based Smart phones, go to the Marketplace.
- Become a fan at www.facebook.com/kidneydiet.
- For more information, visit: www.KidneyDiet.com.

Lynne Sanditen is an app publisher for Pain Free Living, Inc. Pain Free Living, Inc. is focused on providing Smart phone applications to enhance health and well-being. Its premier app, KidneyDiet is available for the iPhone and has recently been released for Android-based Smart phones.

This article originally appeared in the March 2011 issue of At Home with AAKP.

Posted 4/4/2011.

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