

# How the alkaline diet may actually benefit you

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While most celebrity or fad diets have not been scientifically proven to be effective, the alkaline diet can still positively impact your body, especially if you have kidney problems, according to a Baylor College of Medicine expert.

"The alkaline [diet](#) is used to reduce the amount of acid in the body by consuming foods and drinks that are low in acid and high in alkaline," said Sreedhar Mandayam, associate professor in the nephrology section of the Department of Medicine at Baylor. "We usually recommend this diet for those who suffer from [kidney stones](#) or who have [kidney disease](#)."

Mandayam explained that at the cellular level, if your acid level changes or increases too quickly, proteins that are essential for the functioning of the cells may not work properly. Certain proteins impacted can include those that help form receptors and those that are responsible for nerve firing and muscle contracting.

When people have a slow, steady buildup of acid over a long period of time, they tend to lose bone mass, resulting in osteoporosis, and they lose muscle strength and function and their ability to walk and lift things reduces. There also is a significant reduction in cognitive ability.

"The body tries very hard to keep your acid levels in a very narrow range. It's when there isn't enough [kidney function](#) to make that happen that these problems can occur," Mandayam said.

For those who have had or are at risk for kidney stones, Mandayam said the alkaline diet helps in two ways: (1) It helps make the urine less acidic so there is reduced formation of crystals in the urine of calcium oxalate and (2) it reduces the crystal formation in urine of [uric acid](#).

For those who have [chronic kidney disease](#), he said the alkaline diet is helpful in slowing down the worsening of the disease, especially if the diet is started by stage three. As the ability of the kidneys to work is reduced, the [acid](#) that the body produces cannot be eliminated and circulates in the blood, which can cause problems. One way to combat this is to reduce the [acid levels](#) in the blood by increasing the alkaline levels in your diet.

However, Mandayam warned that anyone who is thinking about going on this diet should first talk with their doctor.

"They should talk to a [primary care physician](#) and let them know that they are putting themselves on this diet so that the doctor can monitor to see if there are any adverse consequences," he said. "Each one of us is unique and how each one of us reacts to a particular change is fairly different."

He added that besides increasing the amount of alkaline levels in your diet, he strongly recommends drinking lots of fluid.

"Try to keep yourself hydrated and don't ignore when you are thirsty. Most people probably need to drink about 32 ounces a day," he said.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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