12.4 Potassium

Potassium is the major intracellular cation. Good sources of potassium include beans, potatoes (with skin), milk products, orange juice, tomato juice, and bananas\(^1,2\). Potassium, like sodium and chloride, is well absorbed. Greater than 85% of consumed potassium is absorbed. Potassium is primarily excreted in urine (~90\%)\(^3\).

Potassium is important for:

1. Fluid Balance
2. Nerve transmission and muscle contraction

Increased potassium intake results in decreased calcium excretion. This is the opposite effect of increased sodium intake, which increases calcium excretion\(^1\).

Potassium deficiency is rare but can be fatal. Symptoms include:

- Weakness
- Fatigue
- Constipation
- Irregular heartbeat (can be fatal)

Deficiency can occur in individuals that are on diuretics, drugs that increase urine production, and individuals with eating disorders\(^1\).

Toxicity is also extremely rare, only occurring if there is a problem with kidney function. Symptoms of toxicity are irregular heartbeat and even cardiac arrest\(^1\).

References & Links