Potassium Deficiency Symptoms in Humans

Potassium is an important mineral for the human body to function properly. If the potassium in the body has depleted due to some reasons, there are certain symptoms observed and they are known as deficiency symptoms. Read on to know what they are...

There are three main electrolytes of the human body viz., sodium, potassium and calcium. From this you can make a guess of the importance of potassium in your daily diet. It is a mineral which helps in smooth functioning of kidneys, pancreas, heart, muscles, nerve transmission and conversion of glucose into glycogen, which gives energy to our body. Potassium rich foods and supplements are also available in the market to help you avoid its deficiency symptoms.

Causes of Potassium Deficiency

Potassium deficiency is the result of poor dietary habits. If you fail to consume the required amount of the mineral, it is more likely that you may suffer from its deficiency. Some drugs may also cause deficiency of potassium, as this is one of the very common side effects. Bowel movement may also be a cause. Let us see how.

Potassium is absorbed in the body in the small intestine. If the food in the small intestine moves fast, it will not sufficiently absorb the mineral from it, resulting in deficiency. Potassium is greatly regulated in humans by their kidneys. Some of it is excreted from the body through sweat. Low sodium diets, extensive burns and injuries, surgical operations (related to bowels), excessive excretion of aldosterone, chronic diarrhea, persistent vomiting, anemia, heart diseases, bizarre diets, alcoholism and starvation are the other causes.
Symptoms

Potassium deficiency in humans is commonly known as hypokalemia. Its common symptoms are as follows:

- Muscular weakness
- Fatigue
- Anxiety
- Acne and other skin related problems
- Weak memory and temporary memory loss
- Depression
- Improper sleep and hypertension
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Vomiting
- Low blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Headache
- Nervous system deterioration
- Heart deterioration
- Vibration in ears

Neuromuscular cell discharge is also affected because the way in which these neuromuscular cells are charged and discharged is affected by the mineral. Low potassium levels in the humans can result in this primary action for energizing the muscles, which may result in muscular cramps and muscular weakness. The heart is also made up of muscles that are important. Its deterioration and changes in ECG are observed due to potassium deficiency. Arrhythmia is commonly experienced, and it is of many types. Some drugs that are used to treat high blood pressure also affect the levels of the mineral in the body. It is advisable to people with high blood pressure to get checked for potassium levels in their body. Some people suffering from prolonged diarrhea and vomiting must consult a doctor to ensure whether potassium levels in the body have dropped and needs to be replaced. Extreme thirst and frequent urination are the other symptoms. Another symptom is tingling sensation or numbness experienced in the body, palpitations (due to irregular heart beats) and fainting (low blood pressure). Abnormal psychological behavior like hallucinations, confusion and anxiety, also symbolize deficiency of the mineral.

ECG tests and blood tests are used to determine hypokalemia. Severe cases are treated by giving intravenous potassium. Otherwise, in most of the cases, potassium rich foods are recommended by many doctors.

Along with these foods, drinking electrolyte replacement fluids after some rigorous physical activity can help you reduce the risks of low potassium in the human body. These are the signs and symptoms of low potassium in humans.