Potassium Deficiency Symptoms in Women

Recognizing potassium deficiency symptoms at the right time will ensure timely treatment and prevent further health complications. Read this article to enrich your knowledge on the symptoms of potassium deficiency in women.

Potassium is a mineral that plays a major role in the normal functioning of the body. It is an electrolyte that regulates the fluid and electrolyte balance in the cells of the body. It helps in building healthy muscles, transmitting signals between the nerves and cells of the body, and maintaining the rhythm of the heart. Potassium deficiency is also known as hypokalemia and is a major health problem, as it has an adverse effect on the bodily functions.

Causes of Potassium Deficiency

There are a number of factors that trigger potassium deficiency in women.

- Excessive loss of fluids due to chronic vomiting and diarrhea may lead to a low level of potassium in the body.
- Use of diuretics or laxatives can also be responsible for potassium deficiency.
- Those who eat less foods to maintain low body weight may also develop this problem.
- Many women may have potassium deficiency issues during pregnancy. This is triggered by an increase in the blood volume.
- Other underlying causes are kidney disease, adrenal glands disorder, thyroid problems, poor nutrition, etc.

Symptoms Observed

Initially, the symptoms are mild in nature. Some early signs are as follows:

- Dryness of skin
- Muscle cramps
- Numbness and tingling
- Increase in urine output
- Nausea
- Palpitation
- Weakness
Fatigue
Depression
Dizziness
Low blood pressure

If the condition is left untreated, then more serious symptoms are observed. They are as follows:

→ **Gastrointestinal Problem**
Potassium maintains the level of fluids inside the digestive tract. When there is a lack of potassium in the body, large amount of fluid from the food gets absorbed into the intestines. As a result, the intestinal contents harden up and their passage through the tract becomes difficult. This results in irregular bowel movements or constipation. A severe form of constipation can lead to abdominal cramps, bloating, and lack of appetite.

→ **Irregular Heartbeat**
As we have already mentioned that potassium sends electrical signals throughout the body. The brain controls the contraction and relaxation of the muscles in the body through these signals. When this function gets affected by a low potassium level in the body, then the heart muscles that regulate the heartbeat do not receive the signals on time and fail to maintain the normal rhythm of contraction and relaxation of the heart. In case there is a severe deficiency of potassium, then it can lead to a life-threatening condition like cardiac arrest where the heart stops beating.

→ **Muscle Damage**
The effects of low potassium can be dangerous for the entire muscular system of the body. It fails to initiate a normal voluntary contraction of the limb muscles during activities, like standing, walking, lifting, etc. As a result, the muscles become so weak that the patient may find it difficult to stand or move the limbs around without any support. The skeletal muscles of the body may even suffer a rupture, and the condition is known as rhabdomyolysis. A serious form of untreated potassium deficiency can even lead to paralysis and the entire body becoming stiff.

**Treatment Options**

→ A serious condition of potassium deficiency like cardiac arrest or paralysis is treated on an emergency basis. Otherwise, in most cases, the condition of potassium deficiency in women is treated with the help of a proper diet and potassium supplements.

→ Patients need to eat high potassium foods, like potato with skin, leafy greens, lima beans, peas, dairy products, nuts, chicken, salmon, cod and sardines, and so on. Fruits like banana, watermelon, citrus fruits, and apricots are also a good source of potassium.

→ If the food source is not sufficient, then doctors prescribe potassium supplements. It is mostly needed by pregnant women, elderly women, and athletes. The dosage of the supplements should be taken as per the instructions provided by the doctor.
You should not start taking any over-the-counter potassium supplements on your own, as an overdose of potassium is bad for the health. If any underlying health problem is responsible for potassium deficiency, then it has to be treated to get rid of this problem.

As you can see that potassium deficiency in women is a serious issue that you cannot afford to ignore. You can prevent this condition by including sufficient amount of this mineral in your diet. The daily requirement of potassium in an adult is 2000 - 3000 mg per day, which can be easily obtained if you take a healthy, balanced diet regularly.