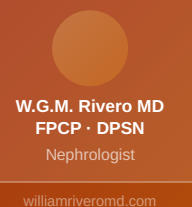


Holiday Kidney Syndrome

Surviving Filipino fiestas, Christmas, New Year, and Holy Week with CKD and dialysis — the complete guide to eating, planning, and staying out of the ER during the most dangerous time of year for kidney patients.



#1 Cause

HD Hospitalization Dec–Jan

Hyperkalemia

Most Common ER Diagnosis

Lechon

Highest-Risk Holiday Food

Plan Ahead

The Only Solution

1 What Is Holiday Kidney Syndrome?

"Holiday Kidney Syndrome" refers to the well-documented spike in CKD and dialysis-related hospitalizations during the Philippine Christmas season (November–January), Holy Week, and fiesta season. The pattern is consistent across nephrology centers: emergency admissions rise sharply after major celebrations, driven by a cluster of predictable causes that all converge at the same time.

The four drivers are: **(1) dietary indiscretion** — feast foods extremely high in potassium, phosphorus, and sodium (lechon, kare-kare with bagoong, alcohol, desserts loaded with condensed milk and fruit); **(2) missed dialysis sessions** — centers close for 2–4 days during Christmas and New Year, leaving patients without their scheduled clearance; **(3) alcohol intake** — raises uric acid, dehydrates, and impairs judgment about food choices; and **(4) dehydration from heat and alcohol** — especially during April Holy Week, when outdoor temperatures accelerate fluid and solute accumulation between sessions.

2 The 3 Danger Zones

Christmas / New Year

(Dec 24 – Jan 2)

Longest holiday dialysis gap (centers close 2–4 days). Highest lechon, kare-kare, and alcohol exposure. Noche Buena and Media Noche create back-to-back feast events. Patients on MWF or TThSa schedules may face a 72-hour gap if Dec 25 or Jan 1 falls on their scheduled day.

Holy Week (Lent)

(Maundy Thursday – Easter)

Extreme seafood excess — dried fish (tuyo, danggit, daing) and salted fish are among the highest-phosphorus and highest-sodium foods in the Filipino diet. Hot April weather accelerates dehydration. Many patients and their families travel, disrupting the dialysis schedule and limiting food choices.

Town Fiesta

(Patron saint's feast day)

Lechon is almost universal. Kare-kare with bagoong, alcohol, and buko-pandan are standard. Intense community and family pressure to eat everything offered — refusing food at a fiesta is culturally uncomfortable. The festive atmosphere makes it easier to rationalize "one time lang" decisions that have life-threatening consequences.

Holiday Kidney Syndrome Is Preventable

The key is planning **BEFORE** the event — knowing your dialysis schedule, packing your medications, and having a "party survival script" ready before you sit down at the table. Most hospitalizations happen to patients who had no plan. The food was the same, the schedule was the same — the only difference was whether the patient had thought about it ahead of time.

HOLIDAY PARTY FOOD DANGER MAP






PARTY FOOD, HIDDEN RISKS

Tasty favorites that can stress your kidneys.

Holiday dishes are often high in sodium, phosphorus, and potassium. Too much can lead to fluid overload and other serious problems.



COMMON PARTY FOODS TO WATCH

 <p>HAM & PROCESSED MEATS</p> <p>Very high in sodium — can cause thirst, swelling, and high blood pressure.</p> <p>SODIUM</p>	 <p>FRUIT SALAD</p> <p>Often high in potassium and sugar — risky for kidneys and blood sugar.</p> <p>POTASSIUM</p>	 <p>PANCIT & NOODLES</p> <p>High in sodium and phosphorus from sauces and seasonings.</p> <p>SODIUM</p>	 <p>FRIED FOODS</p> <p>High in phosphorus additives and unhealthy fats.</p> <p>PHOSPHORUS</p>	 <p>SOFT DRINKS</p> <p>High in phosphorus and sugar — adds empty calories and fluid retention.</p> <p>PHOSPHORUS</p>
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SMARTER SWAPS, SAFER CHOICES

- Choose fresh meats over ham or processed meats.
- Pick lower-potassium fruits in small portions (apple, grapes, pineapple).
- Enjoy pancit in smaller servings. Ask for less sauce.
- Choose grilled, baked, or air-fried options.
- Water is best. Skip the soft drinks.

PARTY SURVIVAL TIPS

- Use a small plate. Control your portions.
- Mind the time. Don't go too long between dialysis and feasts.
- Stay hydrated within your fluid allowance.
- Know your limits. It's okay to say no or enjoy less.

Every patient is different. Talk to your nephrologist or dietitian about the right diet plan for you.

Enjoy the celebration. Protect your kidneys. Small choices. Big difference.

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Fig. 1 — Holiday party food danger map: the highest-risk items at a Filipino celebration are lechon (high phosphorus + sodium), kare-kare with bagoong (extreme sodium — 2,400 mg per 2 tbsp), alcohol (raises uric acid, dehydrates, interacts with medications), and buko-pandan/fruit salad (hidden potassium from fruit and condensed milk). Safe choices exist — the key is knowing which ones before you sit down.

3 The CKD Fiesta Plate — Three Zones

✓ SAFE ZONE — Fill ½ Your Plate	⚠ SMALL AMOUNT ONLY — ¼ Plate Max	AVOID COMPLETELY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plain white rice (2–3 cups — your calorie base) Ensalada (simple, no bagoong — tomato + onion only) Pinakbet vegetables (small serving, no bagoong) Sinigang na isda (small serving, no patis, vegetables only) Boiled/steamed sayote, sitaw, upo Kangkong or pechay (sautéed, no bagoong) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 small piece of lechon (remove the skin — skin is pure fat + phosphorus-rich crackling) 1 tablespoon of kare-kare sauce (zero bagoong) 1–2 pieces grilled chicken or fish (no marinade sauce) 1 small serving of ensaladang talong (no bagoong) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kare-kare bagoong (2,400 mg sodium/2 tbsp) Crispy pata / lechon kawali (very high phosphorus + sodium) Embutido, longganisa, chorizo (phosphate additives) Buko pandan, fruit salad with condensed milk (K+ bomb) Beer, wine, any alcohol Buko water (600 mg K+/cup) Pancit canton (1,200 mg sodium/cup)

4 Holiday Food Reference — Sodium, Potassium, Phosphorus

Food	Serving	Sodium	K+	Phos	CKD Verdict
Lechon (100 g, no skin)	1 slice	390 mg	290 mg	195 mg	Limit — 1 small piece only
Lechon skin (crackling)	30 g	500 mg	100 mg	280 mg	Avoid — high phosphorus
Kare-kare sauce (no bagoong)	2 tbsp	180 mg	50 mg	30 mg	✓ Small amount OK
Bagoong alamang	2 tbsp	2,400 mg	80 mg	40 mg	Avoid — extreme sodium
Crispy pata (100 g)	1 serving	800 mg	380 mg	250 mg	Avoid
Pancit canton (1 cup)	1 serving	1,200 mg	180 mg	120 mg	Avoid — very high sodium
Plain white rice (kanin)	1 cup	0 mg	55 mg	68 mg	✓ Safe — your calorie base
Buko pandan (½ cup)	½ cup	50 mg	350 mg	80 mg	Avoid — hidden K+ bomb
Fruit salad (condensed milk)	½ cup	60 mg	400+ mg	90 mg	Avoid — extreme K+
Beer (1 bottle, 330 mL)	1 bottle	25 mg	90 mg	50 mg	Avoid — raises uric acid!
Buko water (1 cup)	240 mL	10 mg	600 mg	20 mg	Avoid — highest K+ of all
Grilled isda, no sauce	1 medium	120 mg	310 mg	180 mg	1 small piece only

Values are approximate. K+ = potassium · Phos = phosphorus · Daily limit for dialysis: ≤2,000 mg K+, ≤1,000 mg phosphorus, ≤2,000 mg sodium.

THE CKD FIESTA PLATE IN PRACTICE

THE FIESTA PLATE

Enjoy the celebration. Protect your kidneys.

You can enjoy your favorite holiday foods with a little planning and smart choices.



The Goal:
Balance and moderation.
Small choices today, better tomorrows.

BUILD A KIDNEY-FRIENDLY FIESTA PLATE



1. START WITH SMALL PORTIONS

Begin with a little. You can always choose less.



2. CHOOSE KIDNEY-FRIENDLY PROTEINS

Go for grilled fish, chicken without skin, or lean meats. Avoid processed meats.



3. ADD VEGETABLES

Choose low-potassium veggies like sayote, pechay, baguio beans, or cabbage.



4. ENJOY FRUITS IN MODERATION

Pick lower-potassium fruits and small portions. Avoid fruit salad with lots of syrup.



5. WATCH YOUR DRINKS

Water is best. Limit softdrinks, juices, alcohol, and sweetened beverages.



SMART REMINDERS

- ✓ Stick to your diet and fluid plan.
- ✓ Mind your salt, sauces, and seasonings.
- ✓ Avoid "extra" helpings.
- ✓ Take your medications as prescribed.
- ✓ Enjoy the company, not just the food!

You're in control. **One choice at a time.**



Celebrate with love. Choose with care. Protect your kidneys. Enjoy life.



Every patient is different. Talk to your nephrologist or dietitian for a meal plan that's right for you.



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Fig. 2 — The CKD fiesta plate in practice: half the plate with rice and vegetable dishes (pinakbet without bagoong, ensalada, sinigang vegetables), a small piece of lechon without skin, and nothing with bagoong or condensed milk. This allows full participation in the family meal without a dangerous potassium or sodium load. The goal is to eat safely — not to skip the meal.

5 The Filipino Fruit Trap

"Masustansya" Doesn't Mean Safe for CKD

Fruits that are healthy for normal people are potassium bombs for dialysis patients. The fruit platter at every Filipino party — watermelon, ripe mango, melon, grapes — is one of the biggest holiday kidney syndrome triggers. The word "masustansya" (nutritious) does not apply the same way when your kidneys cannot excrete potassium.

Fruit	Serving	K+ Content	CKD Verdict
Watermelon (pakwan)	2 slices (200 g)	320 mg	High K+ — avoid
Melon / cantaloupe	½ cup	270 mg	Moderate-high — avoid
Ripe mango (1 medium)	1 piece	320 mg	High K+ — avoid
Papaya (½ cup)	½ cup	180 mg	Small amount only
Pineapple / pinya (½ cup)	½ cup	120 mg	Moderate — limit 1 serving
Apple (1 small)	1 piece	150 mg	Moderate
Grapes (½ cup)	½ cup	140 mg	Small amount only
Canned fruit in juice (drained)	½ cup	80 mg	✓ Safer option — drain thoroughly

Safest holiday fruit: small serving of canned fruit in its own juice, drained thoroughly. Two or three servings of watermelon + mango at a party fruit platter = 1,000 mg potassium — half a dialysis patient's daily K+ budget in one snack.

6 Alcohol Is Always Dangerous in CKD

Zero Alcohol Is the Only Safe Amount for Dialysis Patients

Why alcohol harms CKD patients: (1) raises uric acid → gout flare risk; (2) causes dehydration → worsens uremia; (3) interacts with BP medications and immunosuppressants; (4) disrupts dialysis fluid balance; (5) impairs judgment about food choices at the party — one beer often leads to "one time lang" decisions for lechon and bagoong.

For transplant patients on tacrolimus or cyclosporine: even 1 drink can raise drug levels dangerously. Do not drink at all.

7 Long Holiday Dialysis Gap Management

The Christmas problem: dialysis centers often close December 25–26 and January 1 — creating a 48–72 hour gap for patients whose scheduled sessions fall on those days. This is the most dangerous period of the year for HD patients.

Gap Day	Required Actions	Watch For
Day 1 of gap	Restrict fluids to 500 mL (above urine output if still making urine). Eat low-K+ diet: rice, cassava, egg, small fish. Weigh yourself morning and evening. Take all your medications.	Weight gain >0.5 kg/day = fluid overload building
Day 2 of gap	Same fluid and diet restrictions. Double-check K+ intake — no fruit, no buko water, no processed food. Call your center's on-call nurse if you have any symptoms.	Ankle swelling, shortness of breath, palpitations, muscle weakness
Day 3+ of gap	Seek emergency dialysis. Do not wait. Contact your center's emergency line or go to the nearest hospital with an HD unit.	Any symptom = ER. Do not "wait and see."

THE FILIPINO FRUIT TRAP — POTASSIUM CONTENT OF PARTY FRUITS

THE FRUIT TRAP

Delicious, but easy to overdo.

Many holiday fruits are high in potassium. Too much can be dangerous for kidney patients.



RAMBUTAN
High Potassium ↑



LANGSAT / LANZONES
High Potassium ↑

ENJOY IN MODERATION

Smaller portions, less often.



SMALL PORTIONS

Stick to small servings.



LESS OFTEN

Not every day, especially during the holidays.



KNOW YOUR LIMIT

Follow your diet plan and lab results.



WHY IT MATTERS

High potassium can cause:

- Irregular heartbeat
- Muscle weakness
- Life-threatening complications



FRUIT SALAD
High Potassium ↑



Love fruits. Protect your kidneys. Balance is the best gift you can give yourself and your family.



Every patient is different. Ask your nephrologist or dietitian what fruits are right for you.



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Fig. 3 — The Filipino fruit trap: common celebration fruits (watermelon, mango, ripe melon) contain 270–320 mg potassium per serving. Two or three servings at a party fruit platter can deliver a 1,000 mg potassium hit. For a dialysis patient on a 2,000 mg/day potassium limit, this is half the daily budget in one snack — enough to tip the patient toward dangerous hyperkalemia, especially after a 48-hour holiday dialysis gap.

HOLIDAY DIALYSIS GAP — DANGER ACCUMULATION OVER TIME

THE LONG GAP RISK

Skipping or delaying dialysis during the holidays can be dangerous.

Extra food, drinks, and busy schedules can lead to fluid overload, high potassium, and other life-threatening complications.



Don't let a few missed sessions become an emergency.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN WITH LONG GAPS?

<p>FLUID OVERLOAD Leads to swelling, shortness of breath, and high blood pressure.</p>	<p>HIGH POTASSIUM Can cause dangerous irregular heartbeats or even cardiac arrest.</p>	<p>TOXIN BUILD-UP Waste in the blood can cause nausea, weakness, and confusion.</p>	<p>BREATHING PROBLEMS Too much fluid in the lungs can make it hard to breathe and may require hospital care.</p>	<p>HOSPITALIZATION RISK Skipping sessions can turn the holidays into a medical emergency.</p>
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PLAN AHEAD. STAY SAFE.

- ✓ Keep your dialysis schedule — even during the holidays.
- ✓ If you must travel, coordinate with your dialysis center in advance.
- ✓ Follow your fluid and diet plan.
- ✓ When in doubt, **don't miss. Call.**

Your best gift this season? Sticking to your dialysis plan.
It keeps you strong for the moments that matter.

Every patient is different. Talk to your nephrologist about your holiday dialysis plan.

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Fig. 4 — Holiday dialysis gap danger: as hours without hemodialysis increase, potassium, fluid, and uremic toxin accumulation accelerates. The 48-hour threshold is the critical limit — patients who have missed more than two sessions are at high risk of life-threatening hyperkalemia and pulmonary edema. Patients whose normal schedule falls on December 25 or January 1 must pre-arrange alternative sessions or emergency dialysis before the holiday begins.

8 The Party Survival Script — 5 Steps

1

ARRIVE WITH A PLAN

Know your food limits before you go. Eat a small low-K+ snack at home first — plain rice + egg — so you are not ravenous at the party. Never arrive hungry.

2

SURVEY THE TABLE FIRST

Before sitting down, walk the table. Identify what is safe (rice, plain vegetables, small fish) and what to skip (bagoong, alcohol, fruit platter, crispy pata).

3

USE THE POLITE DECLINE

"Salamat, may diet po ako — hindi maaari ang bagoong/beer. Kumakain lang ako ng kanin at gulay." Practice this phrase before the party. Most hosts will respect it.

4

ONE SERVING ONLY

No second helpings of anything except plain rice and leached vegetables. Fill calorie gaps with extra rice, not more protein or sauced dishes. One plate — not two.

5

KNOW YOUR EXIT

If you feel shortness of breath, palpitations, or sudden severe swelling during or after the party — go to the ER immediately. Do not wait and see.

9 Emergency Signs After a Holiday Meal

Go to the ER — Do Not Wait. Do Not Call Your Nephrologist First.

- **New or worsening shortness of breath** — especially lying flat: fluid overload / pulmonary edema
- **Chest pain or irregular heartbeat / palpitations:** hyperkalemia — potassium too high, dangerous cardiac arrhythmia
- **Confusion, extreme weakness, or inability to stand:** severe hyperkalemia or uremia — life-threatening
- **Face or body swelling suddenly worse after the meal:** fluid overload — do not "sleep it off"
- **Muscle cramps + weakness together:** electrolyte emergency — needs urgent evaluation

10 Physician Protocol Reference — Post-Holiday ER Presentation

Immediate Workup	Critical Thresholds	Intervention
Serum K+, BUN, creatinine, CO ₂	K+ >6.0 mEq/L with ECG changes = stat dialysis	IV calcium gluconate + sodium bicarbonate bridge; arrange emergent HD
12-lead ECG	Peaked T-waves, widened QRS, sine-wave pattern	Cardiac monitoring; do not delay dialysis for further workup
CXR — pulmonary edema assessment	SpO ₂ <94% + bilateral haziness = urgent	Supplemental O ₂ ; urgent ultrafiltration via HD
Point-of-care glucose, CBC	Rule out sepsis or acute exacerbation	Treat underlying cause concurrently with dialysis

This condensed protocol is for patient reference — show this page to your ER physician if needed.

✓ Key Takeaways

✓ Rice Is Your Friend

Plain white rice is the lowest-potassium, lowest-phosphorus staple you can eat. Fill your plate with it. It is your calorie base and your safety net. Every bite of rice is a bite you are not taking of something dangerous.

✓ Plan Your Schedule by November

Do not wait until December 23 to find out your center is closed on Christmas Day. Call your dialysis center by November to confirm the holiday schedule and arrange replacement sessions. Pre-planning prevents emergency dialysis.

✓ The 3 Biggest Killers

Bagoong (2,400 mg sodium/2 tbsp), **Beer** (raises uric acid + dehydrates + impairs judgment), **Buko water** (600 mg K+/cup). Memorize these three. Avoid only these and you dramatically reduce your holiday hospitalization risk.