free protons and bicarbonate anions, and bicarbonate exits the cell through a basolateral Na^+/HCO_3^- cotransporter. This process is saturable, which can result in renal bicarbonate excretion when plasma levels exceed the physiologically normal range (24–26 meq/L). Carbonic anhydrase inhibitors such as acetazolamide, a class of weak diuretic agents, block proximal tubule bicarbonate reabsorption and are useful for alkalinizing the urine.

The proximal tubule contributes to acid secretion by two mechanisms involving the titration of the urinary buffers ammonia (NH_3) and phosphate. Renal NH_3 is produced by glutamine metabolism in the proximal tubule. Subsequent diffusion of NH_3 out of the proximal tubular cell enables trapping of H^+, which is secreted by Na^+/H^+ exchange, in the lumen as ammonium ion (NH_4^+). Cellular K^+ levels inversely modulate proximal tubular ammoniagenesis, and in the setting of high serum K^+ from hypoaldosteronism, reduced ammoniagenesis promotes type IV renal tubular acidosis. Filtered hydrogen phosphate ion (HPO_4^{2-}) is also titrated in the proximal tubule by secreted H^+ to form $H_2PO_4^-$, and this reaction constitutes a major component of the urinary buffer referred to as titratable acid. Most filtered phosphate ion is reabsorbed by the proximal tubule through a sodium-coupled cotransport process that is regulated by parathyroid hormone (PTH).

Chloride is poorly reabsorbed throughout the first segment of the proximal tubule, and a rise in Cl^- concentration counterbalances the removal of bicarbonate anion from tubular fluid. In later proximal tubular segments, cellular Cl^- reabsorption is initiated by apical exchange of cellular formate for higher luminal concentrations of Cl^-. Once in the lumen, formate anions are titrated by H^+ (provided by Na^+/H^+ exchange) to generate neutral formic acid, which can diffuse passively across the apical membrane back into the cell where it dissociates a proton and is recycled. Basolateral Cl^- exit is mediated by a K^+/Cl^- cotransporter.

Reabsorption of glucose is nearly complete by the end of the proximal tubule. Cellular transport of glucose is mediated by apical