



Kidney Disease

What Do I Need to Know?

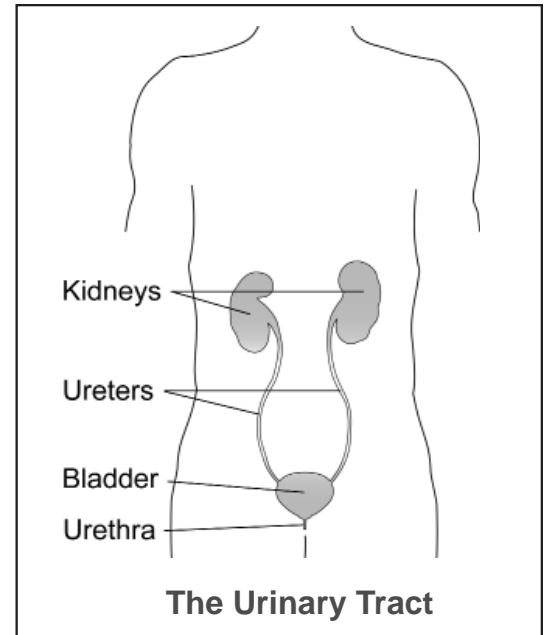
▶ What do my kidneys do?

Your kidneys clean waste and extra fluid from your blood. This makes up your urine (pee). They also do many other jobs that you need in order to live. Your kidneys:

- Control chemicals in the body
- Help control your blood pressure
- Help keep your bones healthy
- Help you make red blood cells

Most people have two kidneys. Your kidneys are located on either side of your spine, just below your rib cage. Each kidney is about the size of a fist.

Your kidneys connect to your bladder by thin tubes called ureters.



▶ What is kidney disease?

The term “chronic kidney disease” (CKD) can refer to many kinds of diseases. CKD is lasting damage to the kidneys that can get worse over time. If the damage is very bad, your kidneys may stop working. If this happens, you will need dialysis or a transplant in order to live.

CKD can be caused by many different diseases. **The most common causes of CKD are diabetes and high blood pressure.** Some infections, inherited diseases and injuries can also cause CKD.

▶ Am I at risk for kidney disease?

Anyone can develop kidney problems, but you are at more risk if you:

- Have diabetes
- Have high blood pressure
- Have a family member with kidney disease
- Are African American, Hispanic, Native American or Asian
- Are over 60 years old
- Have HIV/AIDS

If you think you might be at risk, talk to your doctor about having your kidneys tested. Being tested is easy and could help save your life.

► What are the signs of kidney disease?

Kidney disease often has **no symptoms** until it is very far along. The only way to be sure how your kidneys are working is to get tested. If you do have symptoms, they might include:

- Feeling sick to your stomach often
- Feeling tired or dizzy often
- Swelling in your feet, hands or face
- Back pain
- Bloody, foamy or dark-colored urine
- High blood pressure
- A change in how often you go to the bathroom (pee more or less often)

► What are the tests for kidney disease?

Being tested for kidney disease is simple. Ask your doctor about these tests:

eGFR (estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate)

- This test tells your doctor how well your kidneys clean your blood.
- Your doctor tests your blood for a kind of waste called creatinine. Healthy kidneys filter creatinine out of your blood. Your doctor will then use your creatinine test result to figure out your eGFR.
- An eGFR less than 60 for three months or more may be a sign of kidney disease.

Urine Test

- This test tells your doctor if there is blood or protein in your urine.
- Your doctor may test your urine in the office or ask you to collect your urine at home.
- Protein (called albumin) or blood in your urine may be a sign of kidney disease.

Blood Pressure

- This test tells your doctor how hard your heart is working to pump your blood.
- High blood pressure can cause kidney disease, but kidney disease can also cause you to have high blood pressure.
- For most people, a normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 (120 over 80). Ask your doctor what your blood pressure should be.



Blood Glucose (Sugar) Test

- This test tells your doctor how much glucose (sugar) is in your blood.
- Your doctor will test your blood, usually after you have fasted (not had anything to eat or drink) for 8 hours.
- For most people, a normal fasting blood glucose is less than 100. Ask your doctor what your blood glucose should be.

► Take Charge! Protect Your Kidneys!

If kidney disease is caught early, it can be treated! To learn more, call the American Kidney Fund's toll-free HelpLine at 1.866.300.2900 or email us at helpline@kidneyfund.org