

What to ask your doctor:

Slowing Down Kidney Disease

Getting ready for your appointment

With the right information and care from your doctor you can slow down your kidney disease. Here are some tips and questions to get you started:

- Doctor visits sometimes go by very fast and are full of information. To make sure you have enough time for questions, let your doctor know at the start of the appointment what you'd like to ask.
- Don't feel embarrassed to ask a question if you are not sure what something means.
- Bring someone with you to the appointment to ask questions and offer support.
- Get a notebook and bring it with you to your visits. Write down answers to your questions.
- You may have questions that you don't even know to ask. Here are some starter questions to get the conversation going.

Questions to ask your doctor

- Why is kidney disease so serious?
- How did I get kidney disease?
- What stage of kidney disease do I have right now?
- What do the different stages mean?
- Is there a special way I need to eat with kidney disease?
- I don't have symptoms. Does that mean I don't have kidney disease anymore?
- If my kidney disease starts to get worse, will I feel the difference?
- What do I need to do to stop my kidney disease from getting worse?
- How can I be sure my symptoms are from my kidney disease and not some other reason?
- If I have diabetes, high blood pressure (or both), what does it mean for my kidney disease?
- Are there medicines I can take if I have both kidney disease and diabetes?
- How often do I need to visit you?
- Will you test my kidney disease at every visit?

- How long does it take to get the test results back?
- If I feel ok, do I still need to keep coming to these appointments?
- When do I need to see a nephrologist? (If you are not already.)
- Are there other specialists I should be seeing?
- What is kidney failure?
- Will I need to go on dialysis?
- Will I need a kidney transplant?
- What else do I need to know?

You may have other questions, too. Your doctor is there to help. Please visit [KidneyFund.org/KnowYourKidneys](https://www.kidneyfund.org/KnowYourKidneys) for more information.



Here are some terms you may hear when you talk to your doctor.

Stages of kidney disease

Kidney disease has 5 stages. The higher the number, the less your kidneys work. In stage 1-3 your kidneys still work, but you need to change how you eat and may need to take medicine. At stage 4 your kidneys need more help to do their job and you should be talking to your doctor about what your options are if your kidneys fail. At Stage 5 your kidneys no longer work and you will need a kidney transplant or dialysis. This stage is also called kidney failure or end-stage renal disease (ESRD).

Progression

The word used to explain kidney disease as it gets **worse** in the 5 stages.

Kidney failure

When your kidneys are not working well enough to get rid of your body's wastes and extra fluid. Stage 5 kidney disease means you have kidney failure. If your kidneys fail, unless you have a kidney transplant, you will either need a transplant or will need to go on dialysis to stay alive.

Dialysis

A treatment that uses a machine to do the job of cleaning waste and extra fluid from your blood if your kidneys stop working (kidney failure). Unless you have a kidney transplant, you will need dialysis for the rest of your life to stay alive.

Nephrologist

A kidney doctor who treats people who have kidney disease. Ask your doctor when you need to see one.



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