

TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT

Preventing kidney disease if you have diabetes or high blood pressure



Kidney disease is very serious and can change your entire life.

If you have diabetes, high blood pressure or both, you have a higher chance (risk) of getting kidney disease. This does not have to be you.

If you have diabetes or high blood pressure, there are ways you can prevent kidney disease.

Get Ready for Your Visit

- Write down your questions before your visit. There are some questions on the back of this guide to get you started.
- Ask your questions at the start of your visit. Doctor visits can go by very fast, so this helps ensure you have enough time for questions.
- If you do not understand something your doctor says, ask them what it means. It is normal to have questions.
- It can be hard to listen and take notes at the same time. You can let your doctor know you would like to record the visit on your cell phone voice recorder to help remember instructions for yourself and to share with others involved in your care.
- Bring a pen and notebook to write down the answers to your questions.

Remember, your doctor is a member of your health care team, but YOU are the most important member.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

About kidney disease

- Why is kidney disease serious?
- Am I too young to worry about kidney disease?
- Are there genetic types of kidney disease I should get tested for?
- If I have early stage kidney disease, at what stage should I start seeing a nephrologist?

About tests for kidney disease

- Do you test my kidneys with both a blood and urine test? I would like to have both.
- Do you or your lab use a different eGFR for Black patients? Please make sure to use the standard eGFR equation and not the race-base calculation.
- Do you use eGFR and cystatin C to test for kidney disease?

If you have diabetes

- What should my blood sugar (blood glucose) levels be?
- How often should I check my blood sugar?
- How does diabetes cause kidney disease?
- People in my family have diabetes and are on dialysis. Does that mean I will end up on dialysis?
- Are there any medicines I can take for both my diabetes and my kidneys?
- Should I see an endocrinologist (diabetes doctor) and a nephrologist (kidney doctor)?

If you have high blood pressure

- What should my blood pressure be?
- I am young and healthy but have high blood pressure. What tests should be done to find out the cause?
- How often should I check my blood pressure at home?
- I usually feel fine, do I still need to take my medicine?
- Are there any medicines I can take for both my high blood pressure and my kidneys?
- If I have side effects from my medicine, is there something else I can take?

Know the Terms

Your doctor is here to partner with you to make sure you are as healthy as possible.

But sometimes doctors use a lot of technical terms that are not familiar to most of us, without even realizing it. So if your doctor says something you don't understand, it is okay to ask them to explain again in a simpler way.

Blood glucose or blood sugar

The level of sugar in your blood. Your doctor can do blood tests to check your blood sugar level (hemoglobin A1C), and you can test your blood sugar at home with a glucose meter.

Dialysis

A treatment that uses a machine to clean your blood. Dialysis does the work that your kidneys should be doing when your kidneys stop working (kidney failure). If you are on dialysis, you will need it for the rest of your life to stay alive, unless you have a kidney transplant.

Endocrinologist

A doctor who treats people with diabetes.

Nephrologist

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

Kidney failure

Your kidneys stopped working well enough for you to survive without dialysis or a kidney transplant. It is also called stage 5 kidney disease or end-stage renal disease (ESRD) or end-stage kidney disease (ESKD).

