

## How do I know if I've got kidney disease?

Chronic Kidney Disease is a "silent problem". Usually there are no symptoms until there is severe kidney failure. If you have a risk factor ask your Practice Nurse or GP to check at your next appointment.

### The check-up will include:-

- A urine test  
(take a sample with you)
- A blood pressure check-up
- A simple blood test

## How can I protect my kidneys?

Looking after your kidneys is similar to looking after your heart or preventing diabetes.

- Be active and take regular exercise
- Lose weight if you are overweight
- Stop smoking
- Eat and drink healthily
- Control your cholesterol
- Take your prescribed medications
- If you have a health condition e.g. high blood pressure, make sure you understand it. Don't be afraid to ask your Nurse or Doctor. Understand your medication – ask your pharmacist.
- Always keep your check-up appointments to monitor your condition.

# DON'T GAMBLE WITH KIDNEY DISEASE

## LEARN THE RISKS AND TAKE CONTROL

Learn more about kidney disease from  
The National Kidney Association

[www.kidney.org.uk](http://www.kidney.org.uk)

or

[www.emrn.org.uk](http://www.emrn.org.uk)

Produced by The East Midlands Renal Network.  
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Anyone can get kidney disease. Occasionally it happens after an illness or infection – but this is very rare. Mostly it is a gradual process that develops over many years. Like diabetes, it is a growing problem in the UK. This leaflet aims to give you information on how to recognize it and look after your kidneys.

## What do the kidneys do?

Your kidneys are as important to your health as your heart and lungs. Their main task is to act as sieves which get rid of waste products from the blood. They filter the blood to make urine which gets rid of excess water, waste products and salt from the body. They also help control blood pressure.

Normally everyone has two kidneys. These are located just under the rib cage at the back, one on either side of the spine. They are reddish brown in colour and shaped like kidney beans. Each kidney is about the size of your clenched fist about 10 centimetres long (4 inches). Many other organs depend on the kidneys in order to work properly.

Healthy kidneys filter your blood. Every minute, about one litre of blood (one fifth of all the blood pumped by the heart) enters the kidneys through the renal arteries. After the blood is cleaned, it flows back into the body through the renal veins.

When kidneys are diseased they don't do these jobs as well as normal and waste products accumulate in the blood. If not treated, kidney disease can lead to kidney failure. When that happens, dialysis or a kidney transplant are the only options for keeping a person alive.

Chronic Kidneys Disease (CKD) can be progressive, but with effective treatment this only occurs slowly.

## Who gets kidney disease?

Anyone can be affected but the following conditions make you more at risk.

## The commonest causes of kidney disease are:

### • DIABETES

Diabetes is one of the leading causes of chronic kidney disease. It is important that people with diabetes have their kidneys checked regularly and that any problems to are treated as soon as possible to prevent or delay further damage.

### • HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

One in every four adults suffer from high blood pressure. The combination of high blood pressure and kidney disease is very common. High blood pressure is often called the "silent disease" because a person can have it without knowing.

## Steps to protect your kidneys

- 1** Control your blood pressure and diabetes. Always keep your check-up appointments.
- 2** Ask your doctor or healthcare professional to test your blood and urine for kidney disease at your next check-up.
- 3** If the tests show kidney disease, special medicines called ACE-Inhibitors or ARBs can help. Talk to your doctor about these medications.



## Are you at risk of developing kidney disease?

- Do you have Diabetes?
- Do you have High Blood Pressure?
- Did anyone in your family ever have kidney disease or failure?
- Has a doctor ever told you that you had protein in your urine?

### IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE AT RISK FROM KIDNEY DISEASE

- If you are South Asian or Afro Caribbean then you are 3 to 5 times more likely to develop kidney failure.

**NOW IS THE TIME TO ASK YOUR PRACTICE NURSE OR GP ABOUT A TEST!**