

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

What is chronic kidney disease?

Kidneys take waste out of the blood so that it leaves the body in urine. Chronic kidney disease means that for some reason this is not working as well as expected.

How do you know about chronic kidney disease?

Most people with kidney disease have no symptoms. It is usually diagnosed after blood or urine tests. A new blood test now makes it much easier to recognise a problem with the kidneys.

How common is chronic kidney disease?

About five per cent of the population have kidneys which show signs of damage. Most of these people have mild kidney damage.

What causes chronic kidney disease?

For many people the cause is not known but it is more common in people who have diabetes, high blood pressure or heart problems. It can also be caused by inflammation or swelling in the kidneys or a past history of urine infections.

Will it get worse?

Kidney damage is usually permanent but most people with kidney disease will find it gets worse very slowly. A small number of people will get much worse and need dialysis or a transplant.

Why does it matter?

People with kidney disease are more likely to have heart attacks and strokes so it is important to do things that help prevent this. This includes lowering blood pressure, lowering cholesterol, taking aspirin and not smoking. It is also important to avoid certain drugs that can damage the kidneys and you should always tell your pharmacist about your kidney problem if you are buying medication over the counter.

Will I need to go to hospital?

Most people can be looked after by their GP with regular blood tests, blood pressure checks and a review of any symptoms. A small number of people such as those whose kidney function is getting worse will need out patient hospital assessment.