

Keeping Your Kidneys Healthy



Learn the risk factors of kidney disease to prevent irreversible damage

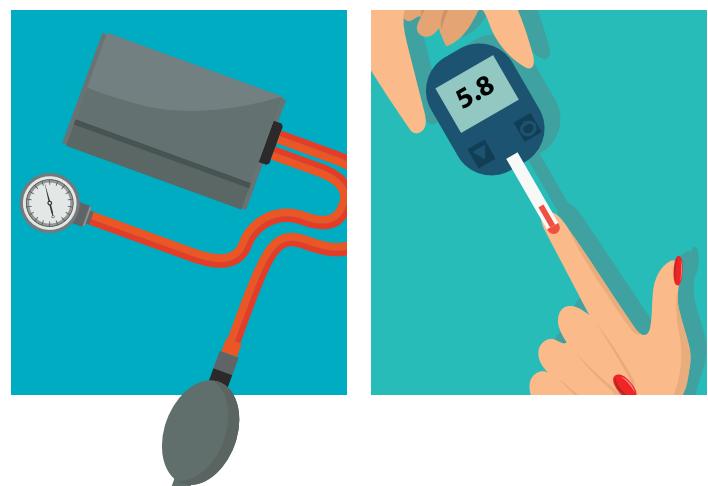
Every time you take a drink of water, your kidneys thank you. That's because the more water you drink, the easier it is for your kidneys to do their job. Your kidneys help filter toxins out of your body to keep you in good health.

When your kidneys are damaged, it causes toxins to build up in your body, which may cause other problems with your health and lead to kidney disease. Right now, over 20 million people in the United States have kidney disease and even more have risk factors.

THE MAIN RISK FACTORS FOR KIDNEY DISEASE ARE:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease
- Family history of kidney disease or kidney failure

The most common causes of kidney disease are high blood pressure and diabetes. If you have these conditions, your kidneys could be slowly damaged over many years without you noticing any symptoms.



PREVENTION IS THE KEY TO KIDNEY HEALTH

Drinking water — six to eight glasses per day is recommended — isn't the only way you can help your kidneys keep doing their job well. You can avoid long-term kidney damage or kidney failure by following these tips:

- **Eat healthy.** Eating plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains helps control weight gain, lower blood pressure and reduce your risk of diabetes — all conditions that can lead to kidney problems.
- **Exercise.** Regular exercise helps control weight gain, lower blood pressure and reduce your risk of diabetes — all conditions that can lead to kidney problems.
- **Get screened.** If you have a family history or other risk factors for kidney disease, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, talk to your doctor about routine kidney function screening. A blood test checks your glomerular filtration rate (GFR), which tells how well your kidneys are filtering. A urine test checks for protein in your urine.
- **Quit smoking.** Smoking can damage blood vessels, causing decreased blood flow to your kidneys and an increased risk of kidney cancer.
- **Talk to your doctor about supplements and medicines.** Certain vitamins, herbal extracts and over the counter pain medicines can cause kidney damage if taken incorrectly or too often. Your doctor can help advise you on the correct dosages and use.



LIVING WITH KIDNEY DISEASE

Kidney disease can happen at any age. It has no signs or symptoms in the early stages and once your kidneys are damaged, it cannot be undone. Therefore, regular screenings are important so the disease can be caught and treated in the early stages to prevent further damage.

In the advanced stages, one or both of your kidneys may fail completely. This is called kidney failure or end-stage renal disease. You may have symptoms including:

- Extreme fatigue
- Itching
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Weakness



If you experience kidney failure, your doctor will talk to you about your treatment options. The most common treatment option is dialysis, followed by kidney transplant.

There are two kinds of dialysis — hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis. During hemodialysis, your blood is run through an external filter to clean it, usually several times each week. Peritoneal dialysis involves surgically inserting a filter into the lining of your abdominal cavity to filter your blood daily while you sleep.

Because dialysis is not a permanent solution, most people will need a kidney transplant, which surgically replaces the damaged kidney(s) with one from a healthy donor.

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