

KIDNEY FAILURE

What is Kidney Failure?

There are two types of kidney failure: acute and chronic. Acute kidney failure is a sudden and complete loss of function typically caused by such things as trauma from an accident. With medical treatment, the kidneys usually start to work again in a few weeks. Chronic kidney failure is a decrease of function in both kidneys over time and is generally the result of disease, such as Polycystic Kidney Disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. This series of fact sheets is written for patients with chronic kidney failure.

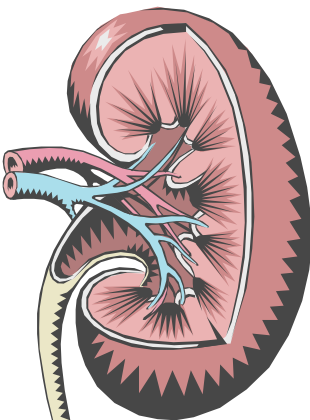
*Diabetes and high blood pressure
are the leading causes
of kidney failure.*

In the early stages of chronic kidney disease, when the kidneys are still working a little bit, some patients can be treated with medicines and a special diet. Food and liquids are necessary for good health; however, as the body breaks them down they produce waste products or poisons (called toxins). Unhealthy kidneys cannot completely remove the wastes. Symptoms of kidney diseases are caused by the buildup of these toxins. One way to control the symptoms is to eat smaller portions of the foods that produce these waste products and to limit the amount of salt and liquids in the diet. Your doctor can refer you to a dietitian to help you with these diet changes.

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CKD: A Guide to Better Living

What Causes Kidney Failure?

There are many reasons why kidneys fail. Diseases such as high blood pressure or diabetes, especially if untreated, can lead to kidney failure. In fact, diabetes and high blood pressure are the leading causes of kidney failure. Some kidney problems, such as polycystic disease (PKD), are hereditary and can be passed from the parents down to their children. Kidney failure can occur at any age, from childhood to adulthood.

Why Are the Kidneys Important?

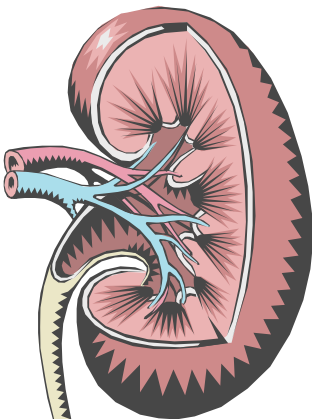
Kidneys are two organs located at the back of the abdominal cavity, one on each side of the spine. Each kidney is about the size of a fist and weighs about 5 or 6 ounces. Kidneys perform life-supporting functions and help keep the body healthy by:

- Making urine to rid the body of waste product
- Controlling the amount of water that stays in the body
- Controlling body chemistry and keeping the proper balance of needed elements
- Releasing hormones to help control blood pressure, make red blood cells and maintain bones.

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Can I Live With Just One Kidney?

Yes. If one kidney is diseased or injured, the other kidney can work to keep the body well.

What is End Stage Renal (Kidney) Disease?

When both kidneys have lost most of their function, waste materials build up in the body. The body's chemical balance is upset and the person becomes sick. It is necessary to have dialysis or a kidney transplant to stay healthy. At this point, the person is said to have End Stage Renal (Kidney) Disease (ESRD).

What Are the Warning Signs of Chronic Kidney Disease?

There are risk factors that make some people more likely to have kidney disease and therefore regular visits to the doctor can help catch changes early. Below are some common symptoms of kidney problems, however, some patients report that they had no symptoms at all. See your doctor!

You start getting up at night to urinate

More foamy urine or a change in color

Puffiness around eyes, swelling of hands and feet

High blood pressure

Creatinine and BUN blood tests outside the normal range*

Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR) of less than 90**

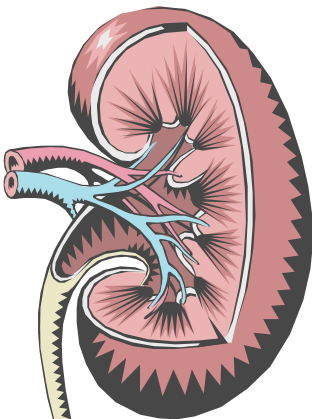
* BUN and creatinine are wastes that build up in the blood when your kidney function is reduced.

** GFR (a measure of kidney function) is estimated from a blood creatinine test. In some people, a GFR of 60 to 89 may be normal.

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