



Kidney disease and women's health

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World Kidney Day
is a joint initiative of:  

Are you kidney aware?

Kidneys are essential to our health and one of the most important organs in the body. They get rid of excess water and toxins, regulate blood pressure, make red blood cells and keep bones strong. They are normally very efficient and it can be a long time before there are signs that something is wrong.

Kidney disease affects over three million people in the UK but up to one million of these people may be undiagnosed. Kidney disease has a number of causes but by far the biggest risk is from uncontrolled diabetes or high blood pressure. Other causes include problems with the immune system, infections or it can be an inherited condition.

Early diagnosis, prompt treatment and changes in diet and lifestyle (such as taking more exercise) can be vital and often help slow down or prevent any further damage. Left unchecked, however, kidney disease can progress to kidney failure, which is fatal without treatment by dialysis or a kidney transplant.

Did you know?

- **Our kidneys filter around 180 litres of blood every day.**
- **Kidney disease is common and can affect anyone, including children.**
- **Right now about 64,000 people in the UK are being treated for kidney failure.**
- **5,200 people are waiting for a kidney, yet only around 3,300 transplants are carried out each year.**
- **We estimate there are 60,000 premature deaths in the UK every year due to chronic kidney disease (CKD).**
- **Acute kidney injury (AKI) is a sudden drop in kidney function due to serious illness. It affects one in five people admitted to hospital as an emergency and may be more deadly than a heart attack.**
- **One in three women get a urinary tract infection (UTI) in their lifetime. UTIs can spread to the kidneys causing damage.**
- **Women with kidney disease face additional risks in pregnancy. However, outcomes have greatly improved and with careful planning and close monitoring, the majority of women have successful pregnancies, even when on dialysis.**

Am I at risk?

Although anyone can develop kidney disease, there are a few things that can increase your risk:

- **Diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular (heart) disease and obesity**
- **A family history of kidney disease**
- **A black, Asian or minority ethnic background**

How can I reduce my risk?

There are several easy ways to reduce the risk. Small changes in behaviour and lifestyle can have enormous health benefits.



Monitor your blood pressure – High blood pressure accelerates kidney damage. To protect yourself from kidney disease you should also maintain a diet low in salt and saturated fats.



Keep fit and active – This helps reduce your blood pressure and therefore reduces the risk of kidney disease.



Don't smoke – Smoking slows blood flow to the kidneys, decreasing their ability to function properly.



Eat healthily and keep your weight in check – This can help prevent diabetes, heart disease and other conditions associated with kidney disease.



Get your kidney function checked – This is sensible if anyone in your family has suffered from kidney disease, if you have diabetes or if you have high blood pressure, or if you have had previous pre-eclampsia during pregnancy.



Keep well hydrated – Hydration helps keep the kidneys clear sodium, urea and toxins from the body which can significantly lower the risk of developing kidney disease.*



Get advice – If you know that you have kidney disease and become unwell e.g. with diarrhoea and vomiting, get advice from your doctor about the medications you are taking.

*Dialysis patients however may need to restrict their fluid intake

World Kidney Day in the UK is led by the Kidney Charities Together Group



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