

KIDNEY HEALTH

FOR EVERYONE
EVERYWHERE



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World Kidney Day
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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. Because the kidneys are so efficient it is usually a long time before there are obvious 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.

- Kidney disease is **common**, can affect anyone but is treatable for some people if recognised early.
- **Uncontrolled diabetes and high blood pressure** are the biggest causes of kidney disease
- An estimated **60,000 premature deaths** occur in the UK every year due to chronic kidney disease (CKD)
- Right now about **64,000 people** in the UK are being treated for kidney failure
- More **women** have kidney disease, yet more **men** start dialysis
- People from **socially disadvantaged backgrounds** are more likely to develop CKD, need dialysis and die with CKD.
- **4,820 people** are waiting for a kidney, yet only around 3,300 transplants are carried out each year
- **3,770 people** a year die while on dialysis and **five people die** every week while waiting for a kidney transplant
- Transplants don't last for life – they currently last an average of **10-15 years**
- People from **black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME)** backgrounds are **more likely to progress faster** towards kidney failure
- BAME patients make up a **third of the waiting list** and have a longer wait for a kidney transplant; many will die waiting.

Keeping your kidneys healthy

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 could mean an increased risk of developing kidney failure more quickly.**

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 regularly – This is sensible if anyone in your family has suffered from kidney disease, if you have diabetes or if you have high blood pressure.



Keep well hydrated – Hydration helps keep the kidneys clear toxins from the body which can significantly lower the risk of developing kidney disease and reduce urinary tract infections. *



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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