



# Kidney Disease— Am I at Increased Risk?

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is increasing in incidence in the United States. Approximately 20 million Americans, or one in nine adults has CKD, and another 20 million people are at increased risk. Because the primary causes of CKD, including high blood pressure and diabetes, are increasing within the American population, it is expected that the number of people with CKD will continue to grow.

Your kidneys perform important functions within your body. The biggest function of your kidneys is to remove certain waste products. The kidneys also help maintain an appropriate water balance in the body and keep other substances, including sodium, potassium, phosphorus and calcium, within the correct range. Besides regulating toxins, water and other substances, the kidneys are also involved in regulating blood pressure, producing red blood cells and promoting strong bone formation. Having kidney disease puts you at a higher risk of developing heart disease. Eventually, if kidney disease continues to progress, you will require dialysis or a kidney transplant in order to remove toxins and water.

Because kidney disease progresses with time, early detection is important to help slow the progression and potential need for dialysis and/or kidney transplantation. Three simple tests are performed in order to detect kidney disease. Those tests are blood pressure, checking for protein in the urine and checking for a substance called creatinine in the blood. People with kidney disease will usually have elevated blood pressure, protein in their urine and higher than normal creatinine in their blood. Besides these effects, people in the early stages of kidney disease generally have no other symptoms. However, symptoms that may occur with kidney disease include feeling tired or having less energy; having trouble concentrating; poor appetite; trouble sleeping; muscle cramping at night; swollen feet and ankles; puffiness around your eyes, especially in the morning; dry, itchy skin; and the need to urinate

more often, especially at night.

Many diseases can damage the kidneys, but the two main causes of CKD are diabetes and high blood pressure. Together, these two disease states account for up to two-thirds of the cases of CKD. Other causes of kidney disease include glomerulonephritis, or inflammation of part of the kidney, inherited disorders, lupus, obstruction due to kidney stones and repeated urinary tract infections. Besides these factors, certain populations are at increased risk, including African Americans, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans, primarily because they have a higher incidence of diabetes and hypertension. Finally, elderly people in general are at increased risk.

What can you do now to try to prevent chronic kidney disease? First of all, if you believe you may be at risk for kidney disease, you should see your doctor and be tested. You can also have a free health screening through Kidney Early Evaluation Program (KEEP), a program designed to find those at risk of kidney disease and provide follow-up counseling. For more information on screening events, you can visit their website at [www.keeponline.org](http://www.keeponline.org) or the Michigan Kidney Foundation at [www.nkfm.org](http://www.nkfm.org). If you already have high blood pressure or diabetes, control is very important. That means keeping the blood pressure or blood glucose levels within the recommendation ranges, through lifestyle changes and/or medications. Close monitoring and tight control of both of these disease states will greatly diminish the risk of developing kidney disease.

The American Kidney Foundation (AKF) has a wealth of resources for people interested in chronic kidney disease. The AKF website ([www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)) has information on making healthy food choices, fitness, dialysis and transplantation. With help from the AKF and your healthcare professionals, you can effectively prevent and/or manage chronic kidney disease.

***For more information, ask your pharmacist!***

*This information provided by the Michigan Pharmacists Association and:*

