



## National Aboriginal Diabetes Association



### Nephrology

In this issue, you will find information on Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) as this is a common complication for people with type 1 diabetes or type 2 diabetes. This information is timely as the month of March is Kidney Health Month. If this is a topic of concern to you, the Kidney Foundation provides resources and other supports. [Click here](#) for their February and March Calendar of Events. To help improve prevention and detection of CKD in Aboriginal populations, [The Kidney Foundation](#)-Manitoba Branch developed an [Aboriginal curriculum](#) for primary and secondary prevention of kidney disease, including screening.

Early discovery of problems and aggressive treatment increase the odds that you can keep your kidneys healthy. Tight blood glucose and blood pressure control can prevent or at least slow the development and progression of kidney disease. <sup>1</sup>



Often kidney disease is associated with other medical conditions including diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. Chronic Kidney disease (CKD) is defined as the presence of kidney damage, or a decreased level of kidney function, for a period of three months or more. Most diseases of the kidney attack the filtering units of the kidney, damaging their ability to remove wastes and excess fluids. Currently there is not cure, but it may be possible to prevent CKD or delay its progression. This is especially true in people with diabetes and high blood pressure, the leading causes of kidney failure.

YouTube: Kidney Disease: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BodnYcHGtiA>.

Infections in people with diabetes tend to progress rapidly. If left untreated, many infections, especially urinary tract infections, can damage the kidneys. People with diabetes must take special care to have infections treated immediately.

#### **What are the signs of kidney disease?**

In CKD, there is a gradual loss of kidney function. During the early years, there may be no warning signs or symptoms. A blood test is often used as a simple measure of kidney function.

Signs and symptoms that may indicate Kidney Disease:

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Puffiness of the eyes, hands and feet
- Passage of bloody, cloudy or tea-coloured urine
- Presence of protein in the urine

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<sup>1</sup> Joslin Diabetes Centre. [https://www.joslin.org/care/kidney\\_health\\_nephrology.html](https://www.joslin.org/care/kidney_health_nephrology.html).

- Excessive foaming of the urine
- Frequent passing of urine during the night
- Passing less urine or difficulty passing urine
- Fatigue, difficulty concentrating
- Loss of appetite or weight
- Persistent generalized itching <sup>2</sup>

### **What can I do to help prevent the progress of CKD?**

There are some ways to prevent or slow down the progression of kidney disease. Many people with CKD find that taking a wellness approach improves their ability to stay fit and maintain a good quality of life. Wellness is a state of physical, mental and social well-being. Several factors include:

- A well-balanced diet
- Regular physical activity
- Good blood pressure control
- Good glucose control if you have diabetes
- Stopping smoking
- Managing anemia
- Weight control
- Limiting daily alcohol
- Taking medications as prescribed

### **Who is on my medical team?**

Having a well-rounded medical team is one of the most important things to have in order to properly care for your kidneys. Depending on the health of your kidneys you may have one or more of the following health care professionals in your corner such as nephrologists (doctors who specialize in kidneys), renal nurses, dietitians, and, of course, your regular health care professional.

### **What are some dietary considerations?**

After speaking with your medical professional team, they may suggest restricting certain items from your diet. Sodium (salt) affects your fluid balance and blood pressure. You need to control your salt intake and avoid foods with a high sodium content.

Potassium is a mineral which helps your nerves and muscles work well. Some potassium is necessary for good health, but too much can be dangerous.

Phosphorus (phosphate) is a mineral which keeps your bones strong and healthy. However, too much phosphorus may cause itchy skin or painful joints, and can cause you to lose calcium from your bones. Some people even need to limit their fluids while others can drink any amount they wish.

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<sup>2</sup> *Kidney Foundation of Canada. Manitoba Branch. Living with Kidney Disease, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition 2006.*

Vitamin and mineral supplements must be prescribed by your doctor in collaboration with your dietitian to ensure you get the right kind.

### **Emotional well-being**

People have different reactions when they learn their kidneys have failed. Some common reactions to this news are feelings of disbelief, anger, loss of control and a sense of loss or sadness. There may also be feelings of loneliness, isolations and depressions. Some people experience denial but fortunately most people learn.

Kidney disease affects people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Different people may face different challenges because of their age, stage of kidney disease or overall health. Kidney disease and its treatment can control your life, but only if you let it. It takes a positive attitude, a commitment to succeed, and a determination to maintain your usual lifestyle.