

MARCH IS NATIONAL KIDNEY MONTH

Statistics

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—

- ✓ Over 20 million adults in the United States have chronic kidney disease.
- ✓ Of these 20 million adults, many are still undiagnosed.
- ✓ In the United States, kidney disease is the 9th leading cause of death.

Where Are My Kidneys?

You are born with two kidneys. These are bean-shaped organs that are each about the size of a fist and located just below your rib cage near the middle of the back. Your kidneys are part of your urinary tract.

Kidney Health

The kidneys perform many important functions, such as filtering the blood, regulating body salt and potassium balance, and even assisting in controlling the production of red blood cells. Their main job, however, is to filter excess waste from the body. Once filtered, these waste products are excreted through urine. In doing so, blood pressure is regulated, bodily fluids become balanced, and red blood cell production is controlled.

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

CKD is a condition in which the kidneys are damaged and cannot filter blood as well as they should. There are 5 stages of CKD and the severity increases with each stage.

Causes of CKD: CKD can affect anyone. Some causes include family history of kidney disease, age, and ethnicity. Certain medications and other illnesses can also contribute to poor kidney health. In fact, two of the most common risk factors for CKD are diabetes and high blood pressure.

Symptoms of CKD: Sometimes, symptoms of kidney disease can go unnoticed. However, common signs can include, but are not limited to:

- changes in frequency or consistency of urine
- swelling of face, hands, or body
- pain in the legs, side, or back

Effects of CKD on the Body: CKD can cause numerous health complications. High blood pressure, weak bones, poor nutritional health, and nerve damage can all occur. Furthermore, the risk for heart disease is increased with kidney disease. When CKD becomes severe, kidney failure can develop. In these instances, dialysis and kidney transplant may be required.

Prevention

Although very serious, CKD can be prevented. Listed below are several ways that you can help keep your kidneys healthy.

- ✓ eating a balanced diet & staying physically active
- ✓ quitting smoking & decreasing alcohol intake
- ✓ controlling blood pressure
- ✓ controlling blood sugar (if diabetic)

Additionally, early discovery of CKD can assist in slowing and even preventing progression. Urine and blood tests are two simple assessments that are available to measure early warning signs of kidney disease.

Treatment Options

There are many options available to treat CKD with each option specific to each stage. There are also many supplements, vitamins, and medications available to treat the symptoms or causes of CKD. In the later stages, dialysis may be used.

It is important to remember to speak with a physician regarding the best possible treatment course for you.