

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR KIDNEY HEALTH





How you can support your kidney health

HELPFUL TIP

When you have a diagnosis of kidney disease, there are many things outside of your control. However, there are still a number of steps you can take to protect your remaining kidney function. As you go through this chapter, write notes in the margins about areas that you might need to focus on to support your kidney health. You can discuss them with your healthcare team.

Most people’s kidney function changes slowly and not everyone with chronic kidney disease will develop end-stage kidney disease. However, damaged kidneys won’t heal, so the rest of this handbook will focus on helping you to maintain the kidney function you do have left. In most cases, supporting your kidney health and protecting your remaining kidney function depend on maintaining a healthy lifestyle and managing other medical conditions you may have.

By the end of this chapter, you will better understand why it is important to control your weight, diabetes and blood pressure and to stop smoking to help prevent kidney failure or to slow down the decline of your kidney function.

Manage other medical conditions

One of the most important ways to preserve your kidney function is to gain control over other medical conditions you may have. The first step is to follow the advice of your healthcare team and to take your medications as prescribed.

Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes

Why? High blood sugar clogs all blood vessels including the filters of the kidney. This causes decreased kidney function. High blood sugars can also damage the nerves that tell you when your bladder is full. A full bladder can cause the urine to back up into the kidneys and cause further damage to those precious kidney filters. This can also lead to increased bladder infections. Keeping your blood sugars well controlled will help to protect the delicate filters in the kidneys and may slow down the decline in your kidney function.

Here are some tips for managing kidney disease if you have diabetes:

- Talk with your doctor or nurse about what your target blood sugar level should be, and when and how often you need to check it.
- Test your blood sugar as often as directed by your healthcare team. The A1C blood test tells you what your average blood sugar level was over the past two to three months. Have this test done

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See **Chapter Five:**

Your diet and nutrition for kidney health for more information on reducing sodium in your diet.

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- Take your blood pressure medications as directed by your doctor.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle and weight. Aim for 150 minutes (30 minutes, 5 times per week) of activity every week, reduce sodium (salt) intake, and make time to relax.
- Don't smoke.
- Make sure to have your kidney function tested annually (or as often as your doctor suggests) by having blood and urine tests.

Other ways to manage your blood pressure

The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan is based on eating foods rich in vegetables, fruit, nuts, and 1% milk products. It is also low in sodium and saturated fat. This eating plan can help you lower your blood pressure.

Maintain a healthy weight

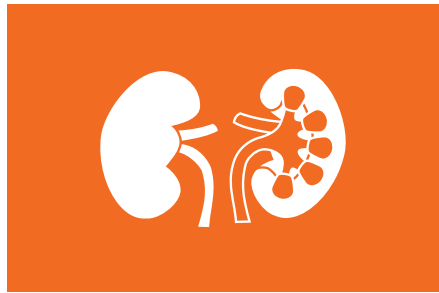
Why? If you are overweight, losing even a small amount of weight can help you control your blood pressure and blood sugar. Controlling your blood pressure and blood sugar helps to protect your kidneys.

Chapter Seven:

Developing a personal care plan of action contains blood pressure logs and other resources to help you manage your blood pressure.



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People with kidney disease who are underweight are at a higher risk of malnutrition, which can affect your energy level and how well you fight off infections.

Where you carry your weight is as important as *how much* weight you carry. If you are more “apple” shaped and carry fat stored around your middle, you are at greater risk for Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Maintaining a healthy weight is a big challenge for many people. Eating a well-balanced diet and staying physically active can help.

Don't smoke

Smoking is well known to be harmful to your health - it increases your risk of heart attack, stroke, lung disease, kidney disease and cancer. Smoking can be particularly harmful if you have kidney disease and can increase the risk of progression to end-stage kidney disease.

There are many benefits of quitting smoking including:

- Your sense of smell and taste improve.
- Breathing becomes easier as your bronchial tubes relax and your lung capacity increases.
- Your blood circulation improves and oxygen levels in your blood return to normal.
- Your risk of heart attack, lung cancer and other smoking related diseases decreases over time.
- You will have more energy as well as more money to spend or save.

See **Chapter Five:**
Your diet and nutrition for kidney health and **Chapter Six: Living well with reduced kidney function** for more information about diet, nutrition and the role of physical activity.

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How can I quit?

Quitting can be hard but there are a lot of supports to help you stop smoking. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about medication and/or nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) that might help. You can also get counselling or join a support group. If you are not immediately successful when you try to quit, try again! Some people have to try five or more times before they quit for good - each time you try, you will figure out what works for you and it will get easier.



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Summary

To support your kidney health and help protect your remaining kidney function, it is important to:

- Manage other medical conditions you may have like diabetes and high blood pressure. Keeping your blood pressure and blood sugar well controlled may help to delay or prevent the progression of kidney disease.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- If you smoke, try to quit.

