

Patient Information about Kidney Disease

<http://www.nephrologychannel.com/patient-information-kidney-disease/index.shtml>

The kidneys regulate levels of important minerals in the blood, produce hormones, and filter waste products and excess water from the blood. Kidney disease, or renal failure, occurs when normal kidney function is impaired. Kidney disease often develops as a complication of other conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure.

Early symptoms of kidney disease often go unnoticed. Chronic kidney disease may cause fatigue, frequent urination, loss of appetite, swelling in the legs or around the eyes, and severe itching. Treatment for renal failure depends on the type and severity of the condition. Early kidney disease often is treated with medication and close medical supervision. End stage renal failure requires dialysis and possibly a kidney transplant.

Here are some questions to ask your physician (e.g., urologist, nephrologist) about kidney disease. **Print this page**, check off the questions you would like answered, and take it with you to your doctor appointment. The more knowledge you have about the kidneys and kidney disease, the easier it will be to make important health care decisions.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Kidney Disease

- What type of kidney disease do you suspect that I have?
- What do you think is the cause of my kidney damage? What factors may have contributed to this condition?
- What kinds of examinations and diagnostic tests will be performed? Will I need imaging tests, laboratory tests, and/or a kidney biopsy?
- What are the risks and benefits associated with these tests?
- How should I prepare for these exams and tests?
- Will I need special help at home before or after these tests?
- Will I be able to return to my normal activities after these tests?
- How might kidney disease affect my daily life?
- Is it possible to reverse my kidney damage or stop my renal failure from progressing?
- What is the stage of my kidney disease?

Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Kidney Disease Treatment

- Might changing my diet help slow or stop the progression of my kidney disease?
- What kind of support is available to help me change my diet?
Nutritionist/Dietician: _____ **Telephone number to call:** _____
- How often should I have my blood pressure checked?
- What should I do if I experience high blood pressure?
Telephone number to call: _____
- Will I have to take medication(s) to treat my kidney disease and related conditions, such as high blood pressure?
- What are the benefits, risks, side effects, and possible complications from these medications?
- What should I do if I experience severe side effects?
Telephone number to call: _____
- Might exercise help to improve my condition? If so, what kinds of exercise can I do and how often should I exercise?
- Might exercise and diet help me to avoid having to take certain medications?
- Can you recommend other resources for more information about exercise, diet, and kidney disease?
- What is dialysis? Might I require this treatment?
- If so, will dialysis cure my kidney disease?
- What are the benefits and risks of dialysis?
- How should I prepare for dialysis?
- Where will I receive dialysis?
Name of Practice/Therapist: _____ **Telephone number to call:** _____
- Is it possible for me to have dialysis at home? If so, what does this treatment involve and how can I get more information about home dialysis?
Telephone number to call: _____
- How long does each dialysis treatment take?

- How often must I go for dialysis?
- What kind of help will I need after dialysis treatment?
- How will dialysis treatments affect my ability to continue my normal daily activities?
- Are there any warning signs I should look for during or after a dialysis treatment?
- What should I do if I experience these warning signs?
Telephone number to call:
- Will I need dialysis for the rest of my life? Why or why not?
- Will I need a kidney transplant? If so, what does this surgery involve?
- What are the benefits, risks, and possible complications associated with kidney transplant?
- How should I prepare for having a kidney transplant?
- How long will I be in the hospital following the procedure?
- What kind of medical attention and help at home will I need after the surgery?
- What kinds of medications will I need to take before and after the surgery?
- How long will I need to take these medications?
- Will I be able to resume my normal activities after I receive a kidney transplant? Why or why not?
Restrictions:
- What does kidney transplant recovery involve? How long is the recovery period?
- Where can I get more information about renal failure and kidney transplant?

Notes/Additional Information