

Chronic Kidney Disease: Facts for Patients

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is the gradual loss of kidney function over time.

Over 26 million Americans are affected by CKD. Damage to the kidneys can get worse over time, but with early detection and proper care its progression can be slowed or prevented.

What are the symptoms of CKD? CKD usually has no symptoms in early stages. The only way to be sure how well your kidneys are working is to get tested.

Classic symptoms of CKD include:

- Changes in urine - more or less often, unusual color, or foamy appearance
- Swelling of feet and ankles, and puffy eyes
- Dry, flaky or itchy skin
- Back, flank, leg pain
- Systemic symptoms - nausea, vomiting, tiredness, difficulty breathing, and poor appetite

How is CKD diagnosed? CKD can be diagnosed by one or more simple test(s). Ask your doctor about these tests, as they may be abnormal:

- Blood pressure measurement
- Serum creatinine
- Urine test for protein and blood
- eGFR (estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate)

Causes and risk factors for CKD:

- Diabetes and hypertension are the most common causes
- Diseases that affect the kidneys, including autoimmune diseases such as lupus
- Inherited and congenital kidney diseases, or family history of kidney disease
- Ingestions or exposures - smoking , NSAIDs, illicit drugs, herbal/slimming remedies
- Urinary tract infection and/or obstruction, and other systemic infections both bacterial and viral
- Ethnicity - African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans

Treatment and prevention of CKD

If you treat kidney disease early, you may be able to slow its progression. If kidney disease is not treated, it can cause your kidneys to fail, and you may need dialysis or a kidney transplant.

The best way to slow or prevent kidney disease is a through a combination of medication and lifestyle changes, such as:

- Maintaining a healthy blood pressure and blood sugar
- Being active
- Eating healthy and maintaining a healthy weight
- Quitting smoking
- Managing stress

