

Chronic Kidney Disease

Fact Sheet and Resources for Indigenous Populations



Functions of the Kidney

Your kidneys are important for many things in your body, including:

- Removing waste from your blood
- Controlling the amount of water and salt in your blood
- Controlling blood pressure
- Controlling the level of red blood cells produced

Keeping your kidneys healthy is very important. If your kidneys become damaged, it can lead to health problems in the future



Chronic Kidney Disease

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is when you have low kidney function or high protein in the urine over at least three months. There are different categories of CKD, ranging from mild to kidney failure. You may not have any symptoms at first. CKD may get worse quickly in some people, slowly over many years in others, and sometimes it stays stable. Only a few people with CKD ever reach kidney failure. The risk of this can be lowered with prevention and treatment. As a result, detection is important. If kidney failure occurs, treatments can include dialysis and kidney transplant.



CKD in Indigenous Populations

Indigenous populations have an increased risk of getting CKD compared to non-Indigenous

populations. Multiple factors, such as geographic location and reduced access to healthcare services contribute to this increased risk.

This is why screening is critical in catching CKD early. This can be done in a primary care setting with your healthcare team. Talk to your doctor or healthcare team about screening options and guidance.

Maintaining a healthy diet is important for those at risk for CKD. Ask your healthcare provider about culturally-specific healthy food options.



Causes of CKD

There are many different causes of CKD. Common causes include:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Kidney inflammation (glomerulonephritis)
- Blockage of urine from kidneys
- Certain medications



Signs and Symptoms of CKD

Most people with CKD do not get symptoms until it is further along. Symptoms and signs that may occur include:

- High blood pressure
- Swollen eyes or legs
- Abnormal tiredness



- Nausea
- Itchiness
- Poor appetite

Not all people will show symptoms. If you experience one or more of these symptoms, you should talk to your doctor.



Other High-Risk Populations

Certain populations may also be at a higher risk of developing CKD, however, being a member of these populations does not mean that you will develop CKD.

Some other high-risk populations include:

- People with diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease
- Older adults (> 60 years of age)
- People with a family history of CKD
- Black people living in Ontario



Preventing CKD

Even if you are at risk of CKD, it does not mean you will develop the disease. In general, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and diet is important to help maintain your kidney function.

Some recommended steps include:

- Eating a healthy diet
- Avoiding unhealthy weight gain
- Getting enough exercise and staying active
- Making sure your blood pressure is treated if it is high
- Looking after your blood sugar levels if you have diabetes
- Limiting alcohol and avoiding tobacco use
- Scheduling regular check-ups with your doctor



Monitoring Kidney Function

Tests that measure your kidney function are important for early detection of CKD. If you are at risk of CKD, you should talk to your doctor. Your doctor may order tests to investigate your kidney health.

Common tests include:

- **Blood Test** – this test measures the level of creatinine (a normal waste product) in your body. The results will allow your doctor to determine your kidney function and assess how well your kidneys can remove waste from your body.
- **Urinalysis (Urine Dipstick Test)** – this test measures the level of blood or protein in your urine. If there is blood or protein in your urine, it may be a sign of kidney disease.
- **Urine Albumin Creatinine Test** – this urine test is more sensitive than urinalysis at detecting and measuring protein in urine.

Your doctor may prescribe medications and provide recommendations for preserving and even improving your kidney function.



Next Steps

If you have further questions or suspect that you are at risk for CKD, talk to your doctor or healthcare team. They will be able to provide further guidance.