

A New Race-Free Calculation for Measuring Kidney Function

What You Need to Know

What is eGFR?

Understanding your kidney health is important for your overall well-being. Health care providers use the estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) which measures how well your kidneys are working. Your kidneys are important organs that remove waste and extra fluid from the body, control blood pressure, increase the production of red blood cells and maintain mineral levels for bone health.

Why Was Race Previously Used in Measuring Kidney Function?

In the past, health care providers in Canada and internationally used race as a part of the eGFR calculation to determine kidney function for Black patients because prior studies made faulty assumptions that Black people are biologically different from other people. For Black people in Ontario, the practice of adjusting eGFR based on a racialized group led to higher eGFR values. This adjustment gave misleading information making their kidney function appear better than it actually was. This practice may have resulted in issues such as improper medication prescriptions or dosages, misusing contrast dyes, and delayed referrals and treatment. [1] There is agreement within the scientific community that the practice of making adjustments based on race is harmful and needs to be stopped.

After scientific study, discussion, and patient feedback, kidney function is now* measured in a new way that looks at information only from your body, and does not factor in your racial background. [2]

How is eGFR Measured Now?

eGFR is calculated using results of a serum creatinine blood test that looks at the amount of waste product in your blood and considers factors like your age and sex assigned at birth to provide a picture of your kidney health. The new eGFR calculation does not use race.

What Does This New Calculation Mean and Why Does it Matter?

Removing race from the eGFR calculation is an important first step in achieving equitable kidney care for Black people in Ontario.

This new calculation may bring about a small change in the eGFR value for Black and non-Black individuals, but this does not mean that there is an actual difference in how well their kidneys are functioning.

It is important to talk to your healthcare provider about how you can keep your kidneys as healthy as possible.

** The new eGFR calculation will be implemented beginning April 2024.*

References

- [1] National Kidney Foundation, "What the New eGFR Calculation Means for Your Kidney Disease Diagnosis and Treatment," 4 October 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.kidney.org/newsletter/what-new-egfr-calculation-means-your-kidney-disease-diagnosis-and-treatment>.
- [2] B. L. Auguste, A. C. Nadeau-Fredette, R. S. Parekh, P. S. Poyah, J. Perl, M. M. Sood and N. Tangri, "A Canadian Commentary on the NKF-ASN Task Force Recommendations on Reassessing the Inclusion of Race in Diagnosing Kidney Disease," *Kidney Medicine*, vol. 6, no. 1, 15 November 2023.

Need this information in an accessible format? 1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, info@ontariohealth.ca. Document disponible en français en contactant info@ontariohealth.ca



Ontario Health
Ontario Renal Network