



Kidney care terms

Access: Also called “vascular access” or “body access,” this is a way to reach the blood for dialysis. There are three types of access: fistula, graft and catheter.

- **Catheter:** A hollow tube used to move blood or fluid in or out of the body. There are two types—one for hemodialysis, and one for peritoneal dialysis.
- **Fistula:** Commonly used method of providing access to the bloodstream for dialysis, in which a vein and an artery in the arm are surgically joined together.
- **Graft:** A vein and an artery in the arm are joined with a piece of special tubing. The graft provides access to the bloodstream for dialysis.

Acute kidney injury: Rapid, sudden loss of kidney function, usually the result of an injury, surgery or medications.

Albumin: A type of protein. Albuminuria, which means albumin in the urine, is a sign of kidney disease.

Artery: A blood vessel that carries blood away from the heart.

Chronic kidney disease (CKD): A disease in which the kidneys do not properly remove waste and excess fluids from the body.

Diabetes: A disease in which the pancreas does not make enough or any insulin (type 1 diabetes) or the body does not use the insulin the pancreas makes (type 2 diabetes). The body needs insulin to convert food into energy.

Dialysis: A treatment for kidney failure that removes wastes and water from the blood.

Estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR): A measurement, taken by blood test, which shows how well the kidneys are working. The lower the eGFR, the poorer the kidneys are working.

End-stage renal disease (ESRD): The end of kidney function (kidney failure), when the kidneys no longer adequately filter wastes from the blood. ESRD is also called end-stage kidney disease or Stage 5 kidney disease.

Hemodialysis: A treatment in which a machine filters wastes and fluid from the blood.

High blood pressure (hypertension): Blood pressure shows how hard your heart has to work in order to pump blood through your body. The harder it is for the blood to flow through the blood vessels, the higher blood pressure will be. For most people, a normal blood pressure reading is around 120/80 mmHg. High blood pressure puts you at high risk for kidney disease, a heart attack or stroke. High blood pressure can also be caused by kidney disease.

Nephrologist: A doctor who specializes in kidney problems.

Palliative care: Care that focuses on symptoms and quality of life, without dialysis or transplant. It is also called conservative care.

Peritoneal dialysis: A treatment that uses the lining of the belly to clean the blood.

Phosphorus (phosphate): A mineral found in many foods. The kidneys control how much phosphorus is in the blood. Normal levels of phosphorus keep bones strong and healthy. At high levels, it causes itching, painful joints and bone disease. People with kidney disease may need to limit the amount of phosphorus they consume in food and drinks.

Polycystic kidney disease (PKD): A type of kidney disease in which many fluid-filled sacs (cysts) form in the kidneys. PKD runs in families and can lead to kidney failure.

Potassium: A mineral found in many foods. The kidneys control how much potassium is in the blood. Normal levels of potassium help nerves and muscles work well. At high levels, it may stop the heart. People with kidney disease may need to limit the amount of potassium they consume in food and drinks.

Urinalysis: a test that looks at urine (pee).

Vein: A blood vessel that returns blood to the heart.