



# Keeping your kidneys healthy

Your kidneys act as your body's main filtering system. Over time, they may become damaged and unable to work as well as they should, which can lead to kidney disease.

## How the kidneys work

The kidneys are two bean-shaped organs located in the middle of the back, just under the ribs. The kidneys have many important jobs, including:

- Filtering blood to stop waste and extra fluid from building up in the body
- Making hormones to help control blood pressure, making red blood cells and keeping bones strong<sup>1</sup>

## When the kidneys don't work like they should

Kidney disease means the kidneys are damaged and unable to filter blood like they should, causing waste to build up in the body. When the kidneys become severely damaged, a person can develop kidney failure, which means the kidneys do not work well enough on their own to keep the person alive.<sup>2</sup>

## Are you at risk for kidney disease?

Anyone can get kidney disease, but you are at a greater risk for kidney disease if you have:

- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- A family history of kidney disease<sup>3</sup>

If you have even one of these risk factors, talk to your doctor about a urine test to check kidney function.

## Tips for keeping your kidneys healthy

Luckily, there are steps you can take to help protect your kidneys.



**Closely monitor your kidney health.** A urine test can reveal if you have protein in your urine, which is a sign that your kidneys might not be working correctly.<sup>5</sup> If you have diabetes or high blood pressure, get a simple kidney test annually. If you have kidney disease, your healthcare team will track your kidney function and damage over time.



**Stay in control of other health conditions.** Managing diabetes and high blood pressure helps prevent damage to the kidneys. Learn what numbers are good for you, and work with your healthcare team to come up with a plan for managing these conditions.



**Keep a healthy body weight.** Being overweight makes your kidneys work harder and increases your risk of high blood pressure and diabetes.<sup>6</sup>



**Avoid smoking and limit alcohol.** Smoking<sup>7</sup> and drinking too much alcohol<sup>8</sup> can decrease kidney function and make kidney disease worse.

## Talk to your healthcare provider

Many people know nothing about kidney disease until it is too late. Kidney disease often has no symptoms, so it's important to get your kidneys checked regularly.<sup>4</sup> Talk to your healthcare provider to find out which tests you need and when you need them.

### Sources

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7. "Smoking and Your Health", National Kidney Foundation, Last accessed Oct. 30, 2023, <https://www.kidney.org/atoz/content/smoking>.
8. "Alcohol and Your Kidneys", National Kidney Foundation, Last accessed Oct. 30, 2023, <https://www.kidney.org/atoz/content/alcohol>.



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This is for informational purposes only and does not replace treatment or advice from a healthcare professional. If you have questions, please talk with your doctor. Talk to your doctor before beginning an exercise program or making any changes to your diet.