







Are you kidney aware?

Kidneys are essential to our health and one of the most important organs in the body. They get rid of excess water and toxins, regulate blood pressure, make red blood cells and keep bones strong. They are normally very efficient and it can be a long time before there are signs that something is wrong.

Kidney disease affects over 3 million people in the UK but up to a million of these people may be undiagnosed. Kidney disease has a number of causes but by far the biggest risk is from uncontrolled diabetes or high blood pressure, particularly if you are severely overweight or obese. Other causes include problems with the immune system, infections or it can be an inherited condition.

Depending on the problem, early diagnosis and prompt treatment as well as changes in diet and lifestyle (such as taking more exercise) are vital and can often help slow down or prevent any further damage. Left unchecked, however, kidney disease can progress to kidney failure, which is fatal without treatment by dialysis or a kidney transplant.

- Our kidnevs filter around 180 litres of blood every day
- Kidney disease is common and can affect anyone, including children
- Right now, around 64,000 people in the UK are being treated for kidney failure
- 3,300 kidney transplants take place in the UK every year but over 5,200 people are still waiting
- One in four adults (one in five children) in the UK are severely overweight which is a major risk for developing kidney disease
- Uncontrolled diabetes and high blood pressure are the biggest causes of kidney disease
- Nearly 1,000 children in the UK are on dialysis or have had a kidney transplant
- Acute kidney injury (AKI) is a sudden drop in kidney function due to serious illness, affecting one in five people admitted to hospital as an emergency and may be more deadly than a heart attack

How to improve kidney health

Although anyone can develop kidney disease, there are a few things that can increase your risk:

- Diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular (heart) disease and obesity
- A family history of kidney disease
- A Black, Asian or minority ethnic background

There are several easy ways to reduce the risk. Small changes in behaviour and lifestyle can have enormous health benefits.



 Monitor your blood pressure High blood pressure accelerates kidney damage. To protect yourself from kidney disease you should also maintain a diet low in salt and saturated fats.



 Keep fit and active This helps lower your blood pressure and therefore reduces the risk of kidney disease.



 Don't smoke Smoking slows blood flow to the kidneys, decreasing their ability to function properly.



• Eat healthily and keep your weight in check This can help prevent diabetes, heart disease and other conditions associated with kidney disease.



 Get your kidney function checked This is sensible if anyone in your family has suffered from kidney disease, you are diabetic, have high blood pressure or are severely overweight.



 Keep well hydrated Hydration helps the kidneys clear sodium, urea and toxins from the body which can significantly lower the risk of developing kidney disease.*

*Dialysis patients however may need to restrict their fluid intake













