Protecting Your Kidneys

Your kidneys work every day to clean your body of extra chemicals and water you do not need. They also have a role in making sure that your blood pressure is kept at a healthy level. If you have problems with your kidneys, learn how you can protect them to reduce further damage.

Risk Factors for Kidney Disease

Some risk factors are genetic or inherited, while others you can change. Talk with your doctor if you have one or more of these risk factors.

- Age is older than 55 years
- Family history of kidney disease
- Past history or currently treated for high blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Diabetes Type 1 or Type 2
- Ethnicity is African American, American Indian or Hispanic/Latino

These factors further increase your risk:

- Being overweight
- Tobacco use, such as smoking cigarettes
- Long term use of over the counter pain medicines called NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen (sold under the brand names Advil or Motrin) or naproxen (sold under the brand name Aleve)
- Exposure to contrast medicines used during tests such as cardiac catheterization, angiograms or computed tomography (CT) scans
- Long term use of a medicine called Lithium
How can I best protect my kidneys?

- Follow your doctor or healthcare team’s recommendations.
- Eat a heart healthy diet that is low in fat, low in salt and includes more fiber. Refer to handout, Heart Healthy Diet Basics, for more information.
- Attempt to get 30 minutes of physical activity at least 3 times a week.
- Keep your blood pressure and diabetes at 120/80 or lower. If you have diabetes, the goal is to keep your HgbA1c level less than 6 % or a level discussed by your doctor.
- Have your kidneys tested to check their function. You will be directed by your doctor on how often to have a Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR) test. Your doctor may also want lab test of Creatinine and BUN levels. These are tests that tell your doctor how well your kidneys filter waste in your body.
- If you notice changes to your health, contact your doctor and schedule a visit.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.