

Kidney Disease

When your kidneys no longer perform their normal functions of fluid or waste removal, this is called kidney or renal failure. This can happen because of disease or damage from injury. There are two types of kidney failure: Acute Kidney Injury (AKI) and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD).

About Your Kidneys

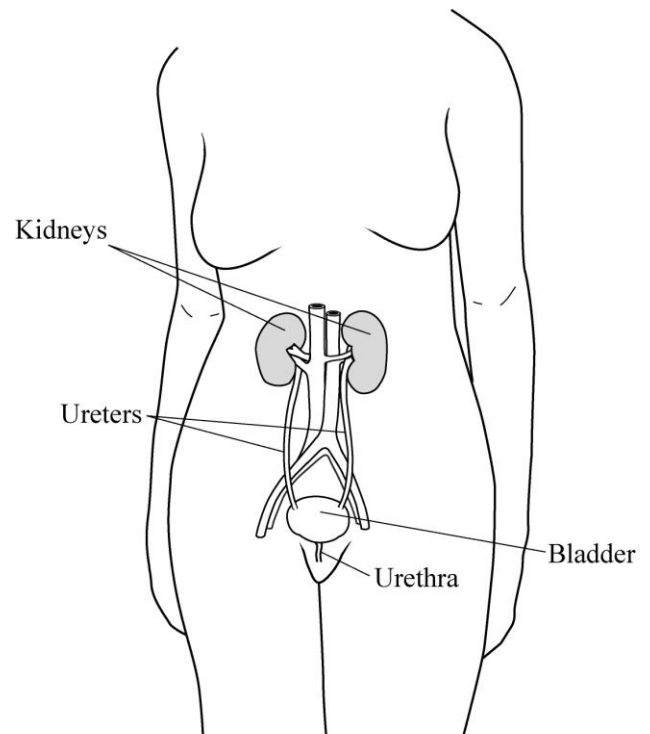
Your kidneys are body organs that are shaped like kidney beans and about the size of your fist. Your kidneys lay on either side of your spine toward the back of your abdomen.

Your kidneys have several functions:

- To rid the body of waste products
- To rid the body of excess water
- To regulate fluid and chemicals needed by the body
- To regulate blood pressure
- To regulate hormones in the body that help produce red blood cells

Inside your kidneys are millions of tiny filter units called glomeruli. They separate excess water and waste products from your blood into urine. A narrow tube, the ureter, carries the urine from each kidney down to the bladder. Your bladder is a hollow pouch in the lower abdomen, which holds the urine. The urine passes from the bladder out of your body through another tube called the urethra. This is called the urinary tract system.

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Learn more about your health care.

Acute Kidney Injury (AKI)

AKI is a sudden loss of kidney function that happens within hours or days. It can sometimes be stopped when the problem is found and treated.

Dialysis may be needed until kidney function returns. Some causes are:

- Severe infections, such as urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Blockage in the urinary tract
- Antibiotics
- Enlarged prostate
- Severe burns
- Heart surgery
- Blocked blood flow to the kidneys
- Chemical or drug poisoning
- Low blood pressure
- Rhabdomyolysis (Rab-do-MI-al-ly-sis) – a breakdown of muscle due to injury that affects the kidneys

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

CKD occurs over a long period of time. Although it cannot be stopped or cured, you and your health care team can work together to slow its progress. Some causes of CKD are:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Cystic kidney disease
- Glomerulonephritis, a type of kidney disease that damages the kidneys, so they are not able to filter waste and fluids from the blood
- Heart problems, such as heart disease or heart failure
- Arteriosclerosis or hardening of the arteries
- Kidney stones
- Chronic infections, such as pyelonephritis, a kidney infection that often spreads from bacteria in the bladder
- Blockage in the urinary system

- Congenital abnormalities
- Collagen diseases, such as:
 - ▶ Lupus, which occurs when the immune system attacks healthy cells and tissues by mistake.
 - ▶ Scleroderma, which is abnormal growth of connective tissue in skin or body organs.
- Drug abuse or other poisons
- Cancer
- Cirrhosis or scarring of the liver

Treating Kidney Disease

A doctor specializing in kidney disease, called a nephrologist, will help with your treatment.

For acute kidney injury, if the kidneys do not start to work on their own, dialysis or other treatment may be needed. If the kidneys do not recover, treatment begins for chronic kidney disease.

No matter what type of kidney disease you have, the doctor may want to start tracking a kidney function measure called eGFR. This is known as your Estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate. When your kidneys are not working well, then wastes and fluids build up in your blood. The eGFR is an estimate of the amount of kidney function you have left.

It is important to track your baseline eGRF and changes in this score over time. Ask your health care team about what is normal for you.

When to Contact Your Doctor

If you are being treated for kidney disease, contact your doctor if you have any changes to your condition or if any of these signs get worse:

- Swelling in the hands, face or feet
- Itching of the skin
- Nausea or vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Changes in urination
- Headache and confusion
- Fatigue and weakness, which may be due to anemia
- Feeling short of breath