

# WELLNESS JOURNAL

Kidney Health Awareness Day

## KIDNEY HEALTH AWARENESS DAY | 14 MARCH 2024

Your kidneys are fist-sized organs located at the bottom of your rib cage, on both sides of your spine. They perform several functions.

Most importantly, they filter waste products, excess water, and other impurities from your blood. These waste products are stored in your bladder and later expelled through urine.

In addition, your kidneys regulate pH, salt, and potassium levels in your body. They also produce hormones that regulate blood pressure and control the production of red blood cells.

Your kidneys are also responsible for activating a form of vitamin D that helps your body absorb calcium for building bones and regulating muscle function. Maintaining kidney health is important to your overall health and general well-being. By keeping your kidneys healthy, your body will filter and expel waste properly and produce hormones to help your body function properly.

Here are some tips to help keep your kidneys healthy:

### 1. Keep active and fit

Regular exercise. It can lower the risk of chronic kidney disease. It can also reduce your blood pressure and boosts your heart health, which are both important to preventing kidney damage. Walking, running, cycling, and even dancing is great for your health. Find an activity that keeps you busy and have fun. It'll be easier to stick to it and have great results.

### 2. Control your blood sugar

People with diabetes, that causes high blood sugar, may develop kidney damage. When your body's cells can't use the glucose (sugar) in your blood, your kidneys are forced to work extra hard to filter your blood. Over years of exertion, this can lead to life-threatening damage. However, if you can control your blood sugar, you reduce the risk of damage.

### 3. Monitor blood pressure

High blood pressure can also cause kidney damage. A healthy blood pressure reading is 120/80. Prehypertension is between that point and 139/89. Lifestyle and dietary changes may help lower your blood pressure at this point. If your blood pressure readings are consistently above 140/90, you may have high blood pressure. You should talk with your doctor about monitoring your blood pressure regularly, making changes to your lifestyle, and possibly taking medication.

### 4. Monitor weight and eat a healthy diet

People who are overweight or obese are at risk for a number of health conditions that can damage the kidneys. These include diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease. A healthy diet may help reduce the risk of kidney damage.

### 5. Drink plenty of fluids

Regular, consistent water intake is healthy for your kidneys. Water helps clear sodium and toxins from your kidneys. It also lowers your risk of chronic kidney disease. Aim for at least 1.5 to 2 litres in a day.

### 6. Don't smoke

Smoking damages your body's blood vessels. This leads to slower blood flow throughout your body and to your kidneys.

## 7. Be aware of the amount of OTC pills you take

If you regularly take over-the-counter (OTC) pain medication, you may be causing kidney damage. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), including ibuprofen and naproxen, can damage your kidneys if you take them regularly for chronic pain, headaches, or arthritis.

Talk with your doctor about kidney-safe treatments if you're coping with pain.

## 8. Have your kidney function tested if you're at high risk

If you're at high risk of kidney damage or kidney disease, it's a good idea to have regular kidney function tests. The following people may benefit from regular screening:

- people who are over 60 years old
- people who have cardiovascular disease or have family with it
- people who have or have a family history of high blood pressure
- people who are obese

A regular kidney function test is a great way to know your kidney's health and to check for possible changes.

## TYPES OF KIDNEY DISEASE

### Chronic kidney disease

The most common form of kidney disease is chronic kidney disease. A major cause of chronic kidney disease is high blood pressure or diabetes.

## Kidney stones

Another common kidney problem is kidney stones. Minerals and other substances in your blood may crystallize in the kidneys, forming solid particles, or stones, that usually pass out of your body in urine. Passing kidney stones can be extremely painful, but rarely causes significant problems.

## Urinary tract infections

Urinary tract infections are bacterial infections of any of the parts of your urinary system. Infections in the bladder and urethra are most common. They're generally easily treatable and have few, if any, long-term consequences. UTIs can cause great discomfort, make you very ill. If left untreated, these infections can spread to the kidneys and lead to kidney failure and cause confusion. Please consult the healthcare team if you have burning urine, frequency of urination and a temp/pain over kidney. We can assist with a urine dipstick which can give us some indication of possible infection and advise you further.

## What you can do to improve kidney health

Your kidneys are vital to your overall health. These organs are responsible for many functions, from processing body waste to making hormones. That's why taking care of your kidneys should be a top health priority. Maintaining an active, health-conscious lifestyle is the best thing you can do to make sure your kidneys stay healthy. If you have a chronic health condition that increases your risk for kidney damage or kidney disease, you should also work closely with your doctor to watch for signs of loss of kidney function.

*Disclaimer: This wellness journal does not provide medical advice. It is intended for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Never ignore professional medical advice in seeking treatment because of something you have read in the Evergreen Health wellness journals.*

