

## March is National Kidney Month

### *The National Kidney Foundation Offers 5 Tips for Reducing Risk of Kidney Disease*

March is National Kidney Month and March 13<sup>th</sup> is World Kidney Day. The kidneys work 'round the clock to filter 200 liters of blood each day, removing two liters of toxins, wastes and water in the process. Simultaneously, the kidneys regulate fluid levels, release hormones to regulate blood pressure and produce red blood cells, and help maintain healthy bones. When the kidneys are damaged, they may not be able to keep you healthy and as kidney disease progresses, wastes can build to high levels in your blood and make you feel sick. Prevention and early detection of kidney disease is critical. Help the National Kidney Foundation raise awareness about this vital pair of organs and the risk factors for kidney disease with these **5 tips to prevent kidney disease and manage risk factors**.

1. **Consider your lifestyle habits.** Following a healthy diet and exercising regularly is an important element of kidney disease prevention. Maintaining healthy blood pressure and blood sugar levels is a critical way to prevent kidney disease and slow its progression. To lower blood pressure and protect your kidneys, reduce your salt intake and watch for high sodium levels in processed foods.
2. **Get tested.** If you're the one in three Americans who is at increased risk for kidney disease due to high blood pressure, diabetes or a family history of kidney failure, it's important to get your kidneys checked during your annual physical. There are two simple tests to check for kidney disease:
  - **A urine test for albumin, a type of protein.** When there is too much protein in the urine, it means that the kidneys' filters have been damaged and are starting to leak protein. Albuminuria – or too much protein in the urine – is one of the earliest signs of kidney damage.
  - **A blood test for creatinine.** Creatinine is a natural muscle by product and this measurement is used to calculate your estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR). The eGFR tests how well the kidneys are filtering wastes from the blood.
3. **Weigh in.** Maintaining a healthy weight has important implications for your kidneys. When you are obese, the kidneys have to work harder to filter out toxins and to meet the metabolic demands of the increased body mass index (BMI), increasing your risk of developing kidney disease. Obesity also increases your chance of developing diabetes and high blood pressure, two major risk factors for kidney disease. Weight loss can help reduce your risk of developing kidney disease.
4. **Be alert when taking meds.** Many prescription and over-the-counter medications, including pain medications, are filtered by the kidneys. This means that your kidneys break down and remove these medications from the body. Always read labels and weigh the risks and benefits of taking a particular medication. Avoid excessive use of medications that can harm the kidneys, such as ibuprofen and naproxen.
5. **Commit to quit.** Smoking can worsen kidney disease and diseases that damage the kidneys, such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Quitting can be difficult, but it is one of the most important lifestyle changes that you can make to protect your kidneys and impact your overall health.

For more information about early detection and treatment of kidney disease, visit the National Kidney Foundation at [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org).