

KIDNEY HEALTH 101



After 50, we all start to lose some kidney function, but for most people it is of little consequence. As you grow older, chronic health conditions can cause your kidneys to work harder. Keep these vital organs healthy for a lifetime by following these recommendations:

- ✚ **Diabetes is especially bad for your kidneys.** Diabetes causes damage to the small blood vessels in organs like your eyes and kidneys. Work with your doctor to monitor blood glucose and kidney function.
- ✚ **Exercise combats chronic kidney disease.** Just 30 minutes of movement three days a week can improve your blood vessel health, which improves kidney function.
- ✚ **Too much alcohol can keep from filtering your blood properly.** Limit alcohol intake. Women should have no more than one drink a day; men should limit to no more than two.
- ✚ **The DASH diet is good for your kidneys.** High blood pressure can damage your kidneys. The recommended DASH diet cuts sodium and red meat intake and increases fruits and vegetables. Consult a parish nurse on a blood pressure weekend or go to dashdiet.org for more information.
- ✚ **Your kidneys need clean air.** Breathing air-containing dust, dirt, smoke and soot can disrupt kidney function. Keep your car windows up and use an air purifier at home.
- ✚ **Certain heartburn drugs, known as PPI's, may cause gradual kidney damage.** Many people take these drugs when they don't need to. Make sure you take the lowest effective dose for the shortest time possible.
- ✚ **Your kidneys want you to quit smoking.** Cigarettes slow healthy blood flow to your kidneys.
- ✚ **Getting 7-8 hours of sleep a night cuts a key kidney disease-related risk factor.** High blood pressure, the second leading cause of kidney failure, can be exacerbated by poor sleep.
- ✚ **A wide variety of symptoms could indicate chronic kidney disease** including: nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, fatigue, sleep issues, changes in urination, changes in mental sharpness, muscle cramps or twitches, swelling of ankles/feet, itching that does not go away, shortness of breath and chest pain.
- ✚ **Bubbles in your urine could indicate kidney problems.** Bubbles, foam or fizziness could indicate protein in your urine, a potential sign of kidney damage.

Adapted from *11 Things You Don't Know About Your Kidneys* Parade Magazine March 2018.

