



Fact Sheet: What is Kidney Disease?

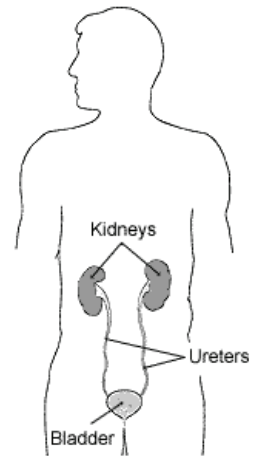
The human kidneys are 2 bean shaped organs located near the middle of the back, just below the rib cage. The main functions of the kidneys are:

1. filtering wastes from the blood;
2. salt and water balance.

Filtered wastes and water are directed to the bladder through the ureters.

Kidney disease results from damage to the nephrons, which are the tiny structures inside your kidneys that filter blood.

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) develops when the kidneys begin to lose their ability to remove waste and maintain fluid and chemical balances in the body. CKD can progress quickly or take many years to develop. If CKD goes untreated, it can result in kidney failure, also known as End Stage Kidney Disease (ESKD). ESKD is treated by lifelong dialysis or kidney transplant.



Risk factors for chronic kidney disease include being diagnosed with diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and having a family history of kidney disease. By controlling diabetes and hypertension, a person's kidney damage can be slowed or even stopped before it progresses to ESKD.

Since kidney disease sometimes has no symptoms, doctors may first detect the condition through routine blood and urine tests. There are three simple tests to screen for kidney disease: checking creatinine levels through a blood test, checking for extra protein or blood in urine, and measuring how well your kidneys are filtering wastes from your blood (estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate or eGFR).

Fast Facts:

- CKD is usually classified across 5 progressive stages and stage 5 is known as ESKD
- North Carolina ranks 9th in the nation for the percentage of persons that require kidney replacement therapy (dialysis or transplant/stage 5)
- About 941,770 North Carolinians have earlier stages of CKD (stages 1-4)
- CKD can often be prevented or its progression slowed with early intervention and diagnosis.
- Both primary care physician and citizen awareness about CKD remains low.

Sources: National Kidney Disease Education Program (NKDEP), National Institutes for Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), NC Institute of Medicine