

Chronic Kidney Disease

Your kidneys are life-saving organs, keeping your whole body in balance. With Chronic Kidney Disease, or CKD, your kidneys become damaged and are less able to remove waste products and excess fluids from your body.

There are many risk factors for chronic kidney disease, including a family history of kidney failure, taking certain medications and immune disorders. But the two most common causes of CKD are diabetes and high blood pressure, both of which can limit the kidneys' ability to filter blood.

"I've been a diabetic for over 25 years. So that was a lifestyle change. So when this came up it was like OK, it's another lifestyle change." – Rogelio, Patient

Rogelio Garcia was surprised by his kidney disease diagnosis, even though he had been ignoring his high blood pressure, a common cause of kidney failure, for 2 years.

"I thought I was invincible. And I paid for it." – Rogelio, Patient

Rogelio had some blood work done because of an infection in his leg, and the next thing he knew, he was rushing to the hospital because his kidneys were failing.

"They were down to like 9 percent functioning and that a typical person that goes on dialysis goes on at like 13 percent. So they were saying that I need a transplant or a good start anyway with hemodialysis." – Rogelio, Patient

"Even though the kidneys are only about the size of a clenched fist, they are on the receiving end of a tremendous amount of blood and every minute that the blood is in the kidney, the kidney is pulling out toxins and poisons and regulating the chemistry."

- Dr. Allan Roza Kidney Transplant Surgeon

Healthy, functioning kidneys continuously clean the blood of waste products and excess fluid. In the average adult, that's about 150 quarts of blood filtered every 24 hours, producing about 1-2 quarts of urine each day. With Chronic Kidney Disease, that life-saving cleaning function gets weaker and weaker. Waste products can then build up in the blood, causing even more damage to the kidneys.

There are 5 stages of CKD, based on what percent function your kidneys have. In the early stages, you might not even notice any symptoms, so early detection and treatment are critical. As the kidneys become more damaged, and less able to filter the blood, you could develop heart and blood vessel problems, high blood pressure, anemia, weak bones and nerve damage.

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"Patients are able to do well with a certain level of kidney function, but once they've reached about ten percent there are serious side effects and that's where dialysis is required to treat some of the potential symptoms of renal failure or to prevent life-threatening complications." – Dr. Allan Roza Kidney Transplant Surgeon

If you've been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease, it's important to set up a management plan with your healthcare team, to try to keep the disease from getting worse. Management plans include diet changes, monitoring how much liquid you drink each day, taking medications as directed, and regular follow up appointments and lab tests.

"It's very important for the patient to buy in because it's preventive care at that point. And what we're really trying to do is prevent the need for dialysis or for transplantation if at all possible." – Dr. Aaron Dall, Nephrologist/Kidney Specialist

Having already learned to live with diabetes, Rogelio accepts that the steps he's taking to manage his Chronic Kidney Disease are just another adjustment.

"I mean it's something that in the long run it's best for you for your health and definitely will help you live a longer healthier life." – Rogelio, Patient