

Kidneys – Keeping Everything in Balance

The kidneys are continuously working to keep the body in a state of homeostasis (or balance) by removing waste products from the blood stream. When kidneys don't work properly, dangerous levels of fluid and waste can quickly build up.

Often, especially with older people, high blood pressure or diabetes can cause a kidney problem. However, a decline in kidney function is a normal part of aging. Kidneys can work well at about half capacity - which is why many people don't realize at an early state that things aren't right.

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) can be difficult to detect initially. Symptoms such as fatigue are often attributed to other illnesses. As CKD progresses, signs such as nausea, vomiting, and appetite loss become more pronounced.

But the kidneys are highly adaptable and can compensate for lost function, so signs of trouble may not be checked until irreversible damage has happened. Untreated, CKD increases the risk of a heart attack, stroke, and even kidney failure.

While there is no cure for kidney failure, proper treatment can control symptoms, reduce complications, and slow the progress of the disease. The first priority is controlling the condition responsible for kidney failure and its complications. Following the proper diet is extremely important, too.

For everyone over 65 and those who already know they have high blood pressure or diabetes, an annual kidney screening is essential. People with a family history of CKS and people of African-American, Hispanic, or Asian descent also need this simple urine screening each year. Staying well ahead of kidney problems is the wisest approach to take.

March is Kidney Month

Prayer: Lord, you see me fully. You know I fight change – even when it is in my best interest. Help me to put into practice unfamiliar choices I know to be healthy. Amen.

For more information, visit:

The National Kidney Foundation - www.kidney.org

American Diabetes Association - www.diabetes.org

American Heart Association – www.americanheart.org