

# Symptoms of chronic kidney disease

Issued by [Intericare](#)

27 Mar 2023

The kidneys are an essential part of our body's filtration system, responsible for removing waste and excess fluid from our blood. When our kidneys become damaged over time, it can lead to chronic kidney disease (CKD).



## What are the functions of healthy kidneys?

- Produce urine which excrete drugs, medicines, poisons, and unwanted chemicals.
- Produce chemicals which regulate our blood pressure.
- Provide the nutrients to take care of our bones and joints.
- Help to make red blood cells that carry oxygen around the body.

## Symptoms of chronic kidney disease

Chronic kidney disease is often referred to as the silent disease because it can go unnoticed until its advanced stages and that is why a CKD diagnosis may come as a surprise to many people. The symptoms of kidney disease may include:

- Swollen face, hands, ankles or feet
- Fatigue
- Decreased appetite
- Metallic taste in mouth
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Foamy urine
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling cold
- Dizziness
- High blood pressure

As the disease progresses, individuals may experience anaemia, bone disease, and nerve damage.

## Causes of chronic kidney disease. How did I get kidney disease?

In many cases, kidney damage is the result of another illness that has progressed slowly over the years. Diabetes and high blood pressure are the top causes of kidney diseases. Kidney failure in South African adults is mainly due to inherited hypertension (60–65%) or Type 2 Diabetes (20–25%). Kidney inflammation, polycystic kidney disease (PKD); autoimmune diseases; birth defects; acute kidney failure; and other problems can also cause kidney disease.

*“ Maintaining a healthy weight, following a kidney-friendly diet  
... and getting regular exercise can all help to keep your kidneys healthy. ”*

### Treatments for chronic kidney disease

Treatment for CKD varies depending on the stage and cause of the disease. CKD has five stages, ranging from nearly normal kidney function (stage 1) to kidney failure, which requires dialysis or transplant (stage 5). In the early stages of CKD, lifestyle changes such as eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, and quitting smoking may be recommended. As CKD progresses, treatment may involve medications to manage blood pressure, control blood sugar levels, or reduce inflammation in the kidneys.

### Prevention of kidney disease

Maintaining a healthy weight, following a kidney-friendly diet (which is the same as a heart friendly diet), and getting regular exercise can all help to keep your kidneys healthy. Managing any underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure or diabetes, and to quit smoking may help your kidneys function better and longer, even when you have chronic kidney disease.

### Schedule a kidney screening

Chronic kidney disease is a serious condition that can lead to a range of health problems if left untreated. If you experience any of the symptoms of CKD or have a history of kidney disease in your family, it's important to talk to your doctor and schedule a kidney screening. The earlier CKD is diagnosed, the easier it is to manage and prevent complications. If kidney disease is detected, it can potentially prevent 70 to 80% of all kidney failure and /or cardiovascular deaths.

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