

Are you AT RISK?

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a medical condition that is long-term (viz. “chronic”) where the kidneys are unable to function properly. But even when the kidneys are affected, very often, they will continue to function to some extent. As you may recall, even people with just one kidney are still able to function normally. This is why CKD symptoms may not be seen until the disease has become much worse. Over time, if this disease is not treated and controlled, it could worsen to kidney failure where the patient may need a kidney transplant or may become dependent on dialysis.

Hence it is very important to understand the risk factors for CKD, and how to prevent it.

Risk factors

Here are some of the important risk factors for CKD.

- Diabetes: High sugar levels in the blood affect the kidney’s filtration system.
- High blood pressure (hypertension): This increases the pressure in the kidney’s blood vessels which affects the way the kidney filters the blood.
- Heart disease.
- Obesity.
- Being exposed to certain drugs (e.g. lithium, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, vancomycin) and chemicals (e.g. lead, mercury, arsenic)
- Having a family member with CKD.
- Being older.
- Having a urinary tract infection or an obstruction in the lower urinary tract.
- Having an autoimmune disorder (where the immune system wrongly recognizes the cells of the body to be “foreign” and attacks them).

Can I prevent CKD?

Perhaps the best way to prevent CKD is to recognize the risk factors and keep a check on factors that can be controlled. Here’s some of the ways you can do this:

- Eat healthy.
- Don’t drink too much alcohol.
- Exercise regularly and stay physically active.
- Keep your blood sugar in check.
- Control your blood pressure.
- Go for check-ups: Many experts believe that people at a high risk for CKD should get screened after a certain age. Talk to your doctor to see if this is right for you.

CKD = chronic kidney disease

References

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3. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (CDC). National Chronic Kidney Disease Fact Sheet, 2014