

# Kidney Disease 101

## Understanding your kidneys.

Understanding your kidneys is the first step in taking control of your health. Following a kidney-friendly diet, taking good care of diabetes, hypertension and other health conditions, and not smoking may improve kidney function, even when you have kidney disease.

Your kidneys—two bean-shaped organs located in your lower back—are your body's filtration system. They clean wastes and extra fluids from your body, producing and balancing chemicals that help your body function.

### What do healthy kidneys do?

- Clean and filter your blood
- Remove extra fluid and produce urine
- Balance chemicals and fluids
- Produce hormones
- Control blood pressure
- Keep bones strong

### How does kidney disease impact me?

With kidney disease, kidneys can no longer remove waste effectively or balance fluids in your body. The buildup of wastes and toxins can change the chemistry of your body causing certain symptoms.

Some symptoms you may have are ones that you won't feel but that will show up in tests that your doctor orders. Common problems are high blood pressure or anemia. It is important to find a doctor who specializes in kidney disease (known as a nephrologist). Work with the doctor and health care team as soon as possible.

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## 10 Symptoms of Kidney Disease

- 1. Couch Potatoing:** Feeling fatigued or weak? Waste buildup or a shortage of red blood cells (anemia) can cause these problems when the kidneys begin to fail.
- 2. Feeling swell:** Swelling of the feet, ankles, hands or face may be from fluid the kidneys can't remove and stays in the tissues.
- 3. Catching your breath:** Do you find yourself short of breath often? Kidney failure is sometimes confused with asthma or heart failure because fluid can build up in the lungs.
- 4. Heavy metal:** Waste buildup in the body can cause bad breath, a metallic taste in your mouth or an aversion to meat and other protein-rich foods.
- 5. What a pain:** Some people may feel pain in their back where the kidneys are located.
- 6. What's the itch?:** Waste buildup in the body can cause severe itching.
- 7. Food fight:** Some people with kidney disease find that food doesn't taste good or familiar, causing a loss of appetite.
- 8. Flow is a no-show:** Making more or less urine than usual, feeling pressure when urinating, changes in the color of urine, foamy or bubbly urine or having to get up at night to urinate can indicate kidney problems.
- 9. Turning green:** Toxins in the body can make you feel nauseous.
- 10. Sugar fix:** If you have diabetes, the main cause of kidney disease, you may experience drops in blood sugar, making you feel anxious, nauseous or tired.