

Healthy Kidneys

kidney Health
NEW ZEALAND
Prevention • Support • Research

There are several ways to reduce the risk of developing kidney disease or further kidney decline

Keep fit, be active

This can help to maintain an ideal body weight, reduce your blood pressure and the risk of developing chronic kidney disease. Organise a regular catch up with a friend and go for a walk, join a sports team, grab a ball and have a family game of touch or book a yoga class. Aim to exercise moderately for at least 2 ½ hours per week.



Be careful when taking multivitamins, food supplements and herbal medicines

Multivitamins, food supplements and herbal medicines may contain ingredients that are harmful to your kidneys. Always check with your pharmacist whether the medicines you are taking may interact with these.



Avoid taking anti-inflammatory medication over a long period of time

Common drugs such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and pain relief medicines (e.g. voltaren) can harm the kidneys if taken regularly over a long period of time.

If you have decreased kidney function, taking just a few doses can cause further harm to your kidneys. It is recommended you avoid NSAIDs and ibuprofen. If in doubt, check with your GP or pharmacist.

Eat a healthy diet

This can help to maintain an ideal body weight, reduce your blood pressure, prevent diabetes, heart disease and other conditions associated with chronic kidney disease.

Do your research to get a better idea of what foods are healthy. Planning your meals in advance can help you feel more in control of your eating habits too.

Reduce your salt intake. The recommended sodium intake is less than 6 grams of salt per day. This includes the salt already in your foods. To reduce your salt intake, limit the amount of processed and fast food you eat and do not add salt to your meals. It will be easier to control your salt intake if you prepare the food yourself with fresh ingredients.

If you already have severe decreased kidney function, please discuss your diet with your dietitian or health professional.



Check and control your blood sugar

Diabetes affects a huge number of New Zealanders, and the number increases every year. It's important to get your blood sugar level checked as part of your general health check up with your General Practitioner (GP).

This is especially important for those who are

approaching middle age or older. About 50% of people who have diabetes develop kidney damage; but this can be prevented or limited if the diabetes is well controlled. Ask your GP to check your kidney function at least once a year with a blood and urine test.

If you have diabetes, here are some steps you can take to reduce harm to your kidneys:

- Maintain your blood glucose targets as often as you can.
- Get your HbA1C tested at least twice a year, but ideally up to four times a year.
- If your blood pressure is high, check it regularly and get it under control to make sure your kidneys stay healthy.
- Read more about diabetes and educate your family/whanau.

Check and control your blood pressure

Having high blood pressure can damage your kidneys, reducing their ability to function properly. If the kidneys are damaged, they may stop removing wastes and extra fluid from the body. Having extra fluid in your blood vessels can raise your blood pressure even more, creating a dangerous cycle.



High blood pressure can go undetected unless checked regularly. Around half of people who have high blood pressure do not know it. Get your blood pressure checked as part of your general health check up. High blood pressure can damage your kidneys. This is especially likely when associated with other factors like diabetes, high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease. The risk can be reduced with good blood pressure control.



Normal adult blood pressure should be $<130/80$. Hypertension is diagnosed if, when measured on two different days, the systolic blood pressure readings on both days is ≥ 140 mmHg and/or the diastolic blood pressure readings on both days is ≥ 90 mmHg .

If your blood pressure is persistently elevated above the normal range, please consult your doctor to discuss the risks and get support with lifestyle modification and treatment.



Fluid intake

The right level of fluid intake for any individual depends on many factors including exercise, temperature of environment, health conditions, pregnancy and breastfeeding.

It is recommended adults have 2 litres of water per day. The level of fluid you have each day needs to increase if you are exercising or are in a warm environment. If you have known health conditions or severe kidney disease, please consult your health care professional for the right fluid intake advice.

Avoid dehydration

Dehydration is the loss of water and salts from your body. Drinking the right amount of fluid every day is an important part of avoiding dehydration and keeping your kidneys healthy.

Don't smoke

Smoking cigarettes or e-cigarettes slows the flow of blood to the kidneys. When less blood reaches the kidneys, it can decrease their ability to function normally. Smoking also increases the risk of kidney cancer by 50%.

Have a sick day plan

Taking some medicines can increase your risk of getting an acute kidney injury, especially if you take these medicines while you are dehydrated, or you take a combination of these medicines on a regular basis. If you are unwell and are unable to drink fluids properly, have a sick day plan. You may need to miss doses until you feel better. Check with your GP or pharmacist about whether the medicines you are taking put you at risk of an acute kidney injury if you become unwell.

High risk factors for kidney disease

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Overweight
- Family history of kidney disease
- Maori, Pacifica or South East Asian ethnicity
- Over 60 years of age
- Heart Disease
- Smoker
- Previous kidney damage

If you have one or more of the risk factors above, ask your GP for a kidney health check.

What is a kidney health check

Blood test: Creatinine and eGFR

Urine: Albumin Creatinine Ratio (ACR)

Blood pressure check

For more information about your kidney numbers please check:
https://www.kidney.health.nz/resources/file/Know_your_KIDNEY_numbers.pdf

How often should I get a kidney health check?

If chronic kidney disease is NOT present: Every 1-2 years.

If you have chronic kidney disease or are a diabetic: At least every 12 months or more regularly as advised by your GP.

What can I do to care for my kidneys?



Stop smoking



Move more



Lose weight



**Take your
tablets**



**Have less fat
& salt in your
food**



**Talk to your
family/whanau
about keeping
healthy**