
Are Your Kidneys Beginning to Fail?

There Are Early Clues



Early Renal Insufficiency

This term means that you have a problem with how well your kidneys are working. It is normal to have questions about this problem. Here are some common questions that are asked:

Why should I worry about kidney problems now when I feel normal?

You feel fine. There's no reason to think that there is something wrong with your kidneys. Then as a result of an office visit, your doctor finds something that points to a problem. At this beginning stage, most people feel well. Usually it's only through tests that symptoms of ERI are found. It's important to find problems early

because some types of kidney problems are treatable. So you want to be sure

to identify those kidney problems and their causes and treat them as soon as possible.

Who gets kidney disease?

- People with chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure (hypertension) may develop kidney problems
- People with autoimmune diseases, such as Lupus, where the body reacts or fights against itself, can also develop kidney problems
- Advances in medical treatment have allowed people to live longer lives. Since the kidneys tend to wear out as we get older, more older people have kidney problems

Some common things you may notice:

- ☹ Tired alot
 - ☹ Not hungry
 - ☹ "Funny" taste in the mouth, dislike for certain foods
 - ☹ Itchy skin
 - ☹ Daytime sleepiness
 - ☹ Nausea
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- There is also an increased risk of developing kidney problems if you:
 - ▶ are African–American, Hispanic, or Native American
 - ▶ have a family history of kidney disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes.

What do normal kidneys do that make them so important?



Your kidneys are important because they help your body to do its daily maintenance work. When the kidneys are healthy, they help your body in the following ways:

- Filter out waste products from your blood
- Remove excess fluid from your body
- Balance the electrolytes such as salt, potassium, calcium, and phosphorous in your blood
- Make hormones that keep your bones strong and your blood healthy

How will I know if my kidney problem is getting worse and my kidneys are not working?

Often in ERI, there are no signs that your kidneys are not working well. You may find out you have a kidney problem from a blood or urine test that is ordered by the doctor as part of your checkup.

Symptoms of advancing kidney disease may occur very slowly, so that you or your family members may not notice many changes.

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If the kidney disease gets worse you may notice swelling in your feet, foamy, “bubbly” urine or problems with your blood pressure. These symptoms may be different in each person.

What can my doctor do to treat my ERI?

If your doctor is not a nephrologist, (kidney specialist) it is important that he/she share your kidney disease management with a nephrologist or renal team of experts. The following will be helpful:

1. Find out and treat the cause of your ERI to reverse it or slow it down. Some causes of ERI can be treated. It is important to know through testing if you would benefit from a certain type of treatment.
 2. Blood pressure control is a very important part of the treatment of ERI. Avoid salt and salty foods. Ask for suggestions about foods you can eat. Certain medications used to treat high blood pressure that have a protective effect on the kidneys are:
 - ▶ “ACE” inhibitors (angiotensin converting enzymes)
 - ▶ “ARB’s” (angiotensin receptor blockers)
 3. Regulate glucose (blood sugar) levels in people with diabetes to keep the kidneys healthy.
- Many studies have shown that keeping your hemoglobin A1C at 7% or less will slow down the damage that diabetes causes to the kidney.
4. Control cholesterol levels with changes in diet or activity. Exercise as well as certain medications can be used to lower cholesterol levels.
 5. Monitoring of kidney function to detect changes is very important. As the kidneys shut down, certain conditions such as a low blood count, bone problems, or imbalances in the electrolytes in the blood may occur. These can be managed with changes in your diet and medications.
 6. Protect the kidneys by avoiding things that are harmful to the kidneys such as X-rays that use dye or over-the-counter pain medications such as Advil, Motrin, and Aleve, etc..
 7. Prevent complications that can occur as a result of ERI such as enlarged heart, fluid in the lungs, and bone problems.

What else can I do to help control my kidney problem?

You can make changes in your life to help you stay healthy.

- If you smoke – **STOP!** Many studies show that smoking may be harmful and actually can cause the kidney to shut down faster.
- If you are overweight, reduce your food intake.
- Start an exercise program that you will do on a regular basis.

How can I learn more about kidney problems?

Learning more about your specific kidney problems will help you feel that you have more control.

You can:

- Ask your health care professional (your family doctor or internist) about how well your kidneys are working.
- Ask to be seen by a nephrologist (kidney specialist) and talk to the renal team. Be sure to ask lots of questions and take notes.
- Become knowledgeable. Read some of the many magazines, books, pamphlets, and handouts available on kidney disease ranging from diet to exercise to choosing the right treatment.
- Log on to the many internet sites created especially for kidney patients.
- And talk to other patients facing the same choices and concerns.



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*Published under CMS Contracts
500-100-NW9 & 500-100-NW10*

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The Patient Services Department at our patient line 1-800-456-6919 or visit our websites:

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