

What is chronic kidney disease (CKD)?

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Chronic kidney disease means that the kidneys have a long-term disease that slowly stops them from working.

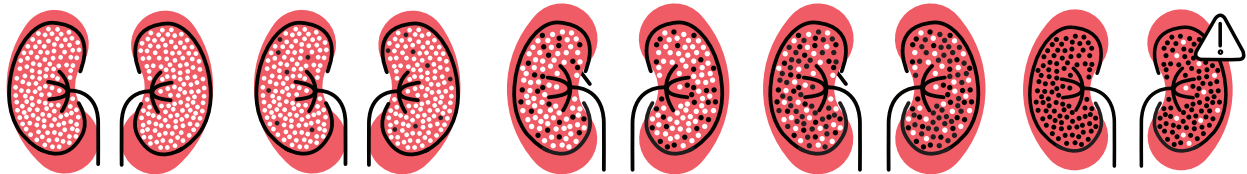
1 in 5 First Nations peoples have signs of chronic kidney disease.

From those that get kidney disease:

- 7 in 10 get it because of diabetes.
- 1 in 10 from high blood pressure damaging the kidney.
- 2 in 10 from other causes.

All First Nations Australians 18 years or over should have a Kidney Health Check once a year.

Stages of disease: healthy kidney to dead kidney



Healthy Kidney	Stage 1 - 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Over 60% working eGFR > 60 No kidney damage	Over 60% working eGFR > 60 With kidney damage	30 – 59% working eGFR 30-59	15 – 29% working eGFR 15-29	Less than 15% working eGFR < 15

Kidney getting sicker →

In stages 1 and 2 (early-stage kidney disease), you may not know that you have kidney disease and feel completely normal. This is because there are often no signs to tell you that something might be wrong with your kidneys.

In stages 3 and 4 (middle-stage kidney disease), you may start to feel sick. The waste in your body increases and your blood pressure rises. Your doctor is most likely to tell you that you have kidney disease during these stages.

In stage 5 (kidney failure) you need to have dialysis or a kidney transplant to stay alive, as your kidneys are now too sick to do their job.

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How do I know if I have kidney disease?

Chronic kidney disease is called a 'silent disease' because people only feel sick when their kidneys have nearly stopped working.

Some of the first signs of kidney disease can be very general and can easily be mixed up with other illnesses.

The only way to keep an eye on the health of your

kidneys is to get a Kidney Health Check.

A Kidney Health Check is a quick and simple check that can be done at your local health centre.

It includes a blood test to check your kidney function, a urine test to check for kidney damage and a blood pressure check.

Your kidneys can get sick without you feeling sick. 90% of your kidneys can stop working without you feeling any changes.

The changes will get worse as your kidneys gets sicker

These changes include:

- high blood pressure.
- the amount you wee.
- the number of times you go to wee.
- the look of your urine (wee) for example, frothy or foaming urine.
- blood in your urine (wee).
- puffiness in your legs, ankles or around your eyes.
- pain in your kidney area.
- tiredness, loss of appetite.
- can't sleep properly, headaches, lack of concentration.
- itchy skin, hard to breathe, feel sick, want to vomit.
- bad breath and a metallic taste in the mouth.
- muscle cramps, pins and needles in your fingers or toes.

Ask your doctor or Aboriginal Health Worker for a Kidney Health Check.

There are important things you can do to slow down damage to your kidneys. They include, stop smoking, lowering your blood pressure and managing your blood sugar levels.

For more information check out the "How do I keep healthy" Fact Sheet.



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Challenges dealing with chronic kidney disease

If you are diagnosed with kidney disease it does come with many challenges.

Rural and remote:

- May need to travel to see kidney doctor.
- Having to move off country for dialysis.

Coping with dialysis and treatment:

- It can be difficult to work and do dialysis.
- Limited access to transport to get to treatment.
- Not feeling well and busy dialysis routines mean less participation in

community and cultural activities.

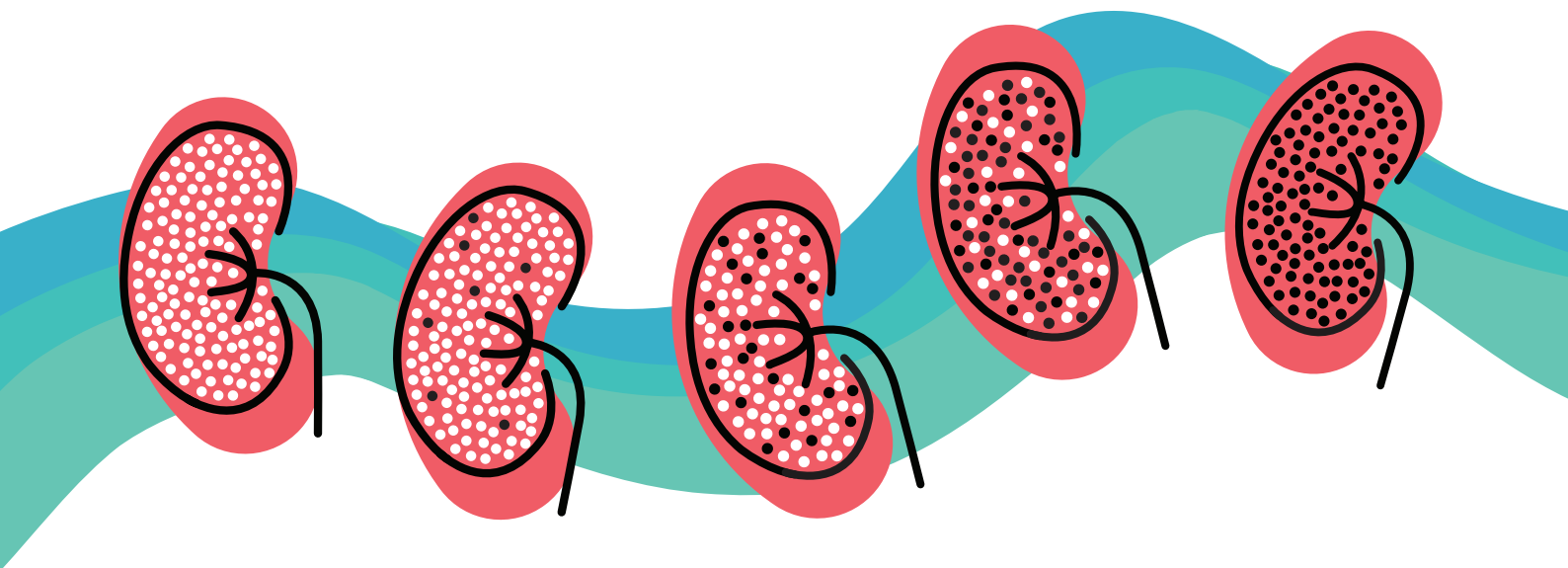
- Mental health issues and stress. Having a chronic (long-term) disease can make you to feel down (depressed).
- Fear of being a burden if you have a carer helping with home dialysis.
- Low transplant rates from both family and deceased donors

Action you can take:

Aboriginal liaison officers, social workers and other community supports may be available to help overcome some of these challenges.

Helpful actions could include involving your family in your care, get help with arranging transport and accommodation to attend medical appointments.

You are an expert in your life and your healthcare needs, and you need to be included in any decisions being made around your kidney disease.



What is chronic kidney disease (CKD)?

Things to Remember:

- Chronic kidney disease is a long-term health condition where your kidneys get sicker over time and may eventually stop working.
- You can lose up to 90% of your kidney function before you feel sick.
- All First Nations people over 18 years old should get a Kidney Health Check every year.
- A Kidney Health Check is a simple check done at your local health centre.

What does that word mean?

Blood pressure - The pressure of the blood in the arteries as it is pumped around the body by the heart.

Diabetes - A chronic disease where levels of sugar in the blood are too high. This happens because the body doesn't produce or use a hormone called insulin the way it should.

Dialysis - A treatment for kidney failure that removes waste products and excess fluid from your blood by filtering your blood through a special membrane. There are two types of dialysis: haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis.

Kidney failure - The stage of kidney disease when the person's kidneys have stopped working so treatment such as dialysis or a transplant is needed to sustain life.

Social Worker - Health professionals who are available to support and advise you and your family about daily stresses, lifestyle readjustments and practical issues associated with kidney disease.

Kidney Transplant - A medical operation in which a kidney is removed from the body of one person (the donor) and put it into the body of another person (the recipient).

Urine - The name for excess fluid and waste products that are removed from the body by the kidneys. Commonly called wee.



For more information

To access more information about Kidney Disease, please scan the QR code.

Freecall 1800 454 363
kidney.org.au



If you have a hearing or speech impairment, contact the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677 or relayservice.com.au
For all types of services ask for 1800 454 363

This is intended as a general introduction to this topic and is not meant to substitute for your doctor's or Health Professional's advice. All care is taken to ensure that the information is relevant to the reader and applicable to each state in Australia. It should be noted that Kidney Health Australia recognises that each person's experience is individual and that variations do occur in treatment and management due to personal circumstances, the health professional and the state one lives in. Should you require further information always consult your doctor or health professional.