

NEW HEART CALCULATOR ENSURES GPs DIAGNOSE KIDNEY DISEASE EARLIER AND SAVE THOUSANDS OF LIVES

KIDNEY DISEASE IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST RISK FACTORS FOR CARDIOVASCULAR DEATHS YET SEVERELY UNDER-DIAGNOSED, UNTIL NOW.

Kidney disease will be detected earlier thanks to new cardiovascular guidelines and an online risk calculator, highlighting the close link between kidney disease and cardiovascular disease.

Kidney Health Australia, a member of the **Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA)**, helped develop the *2023 Australian Guideline for assessing and managing cardiovascular disease risk* and associated Aus CVD Risk Calculator, which was launched in Canberra today.

Not updated since 2012, the new guidelines identify the importance of kidney disease as a major risk factor for heart disease, reinforcing the need for GPs to do a Kidney Health Check before completing their cardiovascular assessment.

Kidney disease remains severely underdiagnosed due to its symptomless nature. Now, those being assessed for cardiovascular disease (CVD) will have their kidney health assessed earlier, giving them more time to treat and manage the interlinking conditions. With both diseases sharing common risk factors and also being risk factors for one another, the guidelines will make it easier for GPs to assess them hand in hand.

The presence of either disease also increases the mortality rate of the other. Chronic kidney disease increases the mortality rate of those with CVD by approximately 60% and CVD is the leading cause of death for those with chronic kidney disease.

Chris Forbes, Kidney Health Australia CEO and Chair of the **Australian Chronic Diseases Prevention Alliance (ACDPA)**, said the new calculator is a powerful tool that would result in earlier detection and treatment of chronic kidney disease, ultimately reducing the number of associated cardiovascular deaths.

“Kidney disease and resultant potential for cardiovascular death is a ticking time bomb for the 1.8 million Aussies currently living with undiagnosed kidney disease,” Mr Forbes said.

“The guidelines and calculator are another critical step in detecting and managing both diseases earlier to save thousands of lives,” Mr Forbes said.

According to Kidney Health Australia’s recently released **Deloitte Economics Access Report**, earlier detection of kidney disease could result in 38,200 fewer deaths due to kidney failure and CVD-related events, 237,234 fewer CVD hospitalisations and save the economy \$3.3 billion in reduced occurrence of kidney-related cardiovascular disease hospitalisations over the next 20 years.

Only a relatively small proportion of those with chronic kidney disease will progress to kidney failure requiring dialysis or kidney transplant; a far greater proportion will die prematurely, largely due to cardiovascular complications.

In 2020, **Jodie Jeeves** lost her husband and father-of-five to a heart attack only one year after being told his kidney function deteriorated to six percent. He was a fit and healthy 48 year old. “With kidney disease, you really don’t know what’s going on under the surface,” said Mrs Jeeves.

The Aus CVD calculator will help healthcare professionals predict the likelihood of a cardiovascular event over the next 5 years, allowing people with CKD and their doctors to better manage this risk. The guidelines reinforce Kidney Health Australia’s *Primary Care Professional Handbook* and education programs, which emphasis cardiovascular assessment as an important step in CKD management.

Endorsed by the **Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)**, the guidelines offer clinicians practical advice and tools to facilitate shared decision-making with their patients.

The guidelines also provide greater support for First Nations Australians. Among First Nations Australians adults with cardiovascular disease, 32% have comorbid CKD (compared to 21% of non-Indigenous Australians).

Dr Karen Dwyer, Clinical Director at Kidney Health Australia, who was part of the guidelines’ development team said: “It is critical to make the link - think kidney disease, think heart disease. Think heart disease, think kidney disease.”

Mr Forbes added, “Diagnosing and managing kidney disease earlier prevents heart deaths and hospitalisations, reduces economic impacts and keeps Aussies out of hospital, working and enjoying life longer.”

KEY STATISTICS

- Chronic kidney disease affects more than 2 million Australians – that’s almost one in every 10. This increases to 1 in 5 for First Nations Australians.
- Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) and Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) are closely linked. Chronic kidney disease independently increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases across all ages and stages. In 25 to 34-year-olds with kidney failure, annual mortality increases 500 to 1000-fold and corresponds to that of the 85-year-old general population. In people with existing cardiovascular disease, the presence of kidney disease increases mortality by approximately 60% compared to those without CKD.
- Early detection can result in 38,200 fewer deaths due to kidney failure and CVD-related events over the next 20 years and 237,324 fewer CVD hospitalisations.
- There would be \$3.3 billion savings on reduced occurrence of CKD-related CVD hospitalisations due to early detection.
- 1.8 million Australians are unaware they have kidney disease.
- 3 in 4 Australians are at risk of kidney disease.
- Around 66 Australians die per day with chronic kidney disease (more than breast and prostate cancer and road accidents).
- Chronic kidney disease contributes to 1 in 6 hospitalisations in Australia.
- Chronic kidney disease is an underlying cause in 12 per cent of all deaths in Australia.

- Chronic kidney disease cost Australia \$9.9 billion each year, including \$2.3 billion to our healthcare system – an unnecessary cost if we diagnose kidney disease earlier.
- For every dollar invested in targeted early detection of chronic kidney disease, \$45 in costs are saved in the health system.
- People can lose up to 90 per cent of their kidney function before symptoms appear. At this stage the damage is irreversible.

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About Kidney Health Australia

Kidney Health Australia is the recognised voice for kidney disease in Australia, striving to reduce the incidence of the disease in the community, and saving and improving the lives of those who are affected.

For over 50 years, the peak body has connected kidney patients to vital resources and support programs to help them manage their condition, as well as advocating on their behalf for health initiatives that will improve their quality of life.

With 1.8 million Australians unaware they have the early signs of kidney disease, early detection continues to be a key driver for Kidney Health Australia, with a focus on awareness raising activities targeting those at risk, as well as educating and supporting Healthcare Professionals on earlier diagnosis, treatment and management of kidney disease.

Research into kidney disease also continues to be a key focus, with the organization working with the clinical and research community to support treatment improvements and innovations so that one day, every Australian can enjoy good kidney health.

To find out more visit www.kidney.org.au