



KIDNEY DAMAGE AND WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU

You have been given this leaflet because a recent blood test has shown that you have some kidney damage. The medical term is chronic kidney disease (or CKD for short), but do not be alarmed by these words, as it just means that your kidneys are not functioning as well as normal.

CKD is common, affecting between one in every twenty (5%) and one in every ten (10%) of the population, so you are not alone.

You have been told that you have CKD because although the existing damage is permanent there are lots of things you can do to help stop your kidney damage getting worse. The good news is that for most people with CKD, kidney function remains stable over time with appropriate treatment.

THE STAGES OF CKD

Your doctor or nurse may have told you that you have a particular stage of kidney disease. This has been based on a blood test, which indicates how much kidney function you have as a number - the estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR).

A normal level of eGFR is roughly 100 so it is easier to think of this as a percentage of kidney function. So, for example, an eGFR result of 50 means that you have 50% of normal kidney function.

Kidney damage is classified into five different stages. The stages are:

- **Stage 1 and stage 2:** These stages indicate there is some slight sign of kidney damage, such as blood and/or protein in the urine but that kidney function is normal or only slightly reduced.
- **Stages 3A and 3B:** Kidney function is 30-59% of normal. This indicates a moderate reduction in kidney function but not to a level that is worrying or life-threatening. The aim of treatment and lifestyle changes is to keep people at stage 3 CKD and stop them from progressing to stage 4.

- **Stage 4:** Kidney function is between 15-29% of normal. This is a more severe reduction in kidney function. People with stage 4 CKD are likely to see a specialist for assessment and treatment.

- **Stage 5:** Kidney function is less than 15%. This is established kidney failure. Dialysis or a kidney transplant may be needed in the future.

Most people with stage 3 kidney damage have stable kidney function which, with recommended lifestyle changes, is unlikely to get worse. However, a minority of people with CKD will see a slow deterioration in function and there is a small chance they will need dialysis in the future. However, this is by no means definite, and there are lots of self-help measures that can prevent it.

WHAT HAPPENS TO KIDNEY FUNCTION WITH AGE?

Kidney function generally declines naturally with age. For every year over the age of 40, a person can lose 1% of kidney function. By the age of 80, some people may have only 60% of their kidney function remaining. However, this doesn't mean that they would necessarily suffer from health problems. Many people are able to live healthy lives even when their kidney function is reduced to as low as 20%.

HELPING YOURSELF

Regular blood tests

You should continue going for regular blood tests to monitor kidney function as requested by your doctor.

Lowering blood pressure

If you have high blood pressure, it is very important you take the tablets you are given to reduce this. Controlling high blood pressure helps stop kidney damage getting worse. If you have any side-effects

from your tablets, tell your doctor or nurse as they may be able to give you another type of medicine.

You can buy a blood pressure machine to monitor your own blood pressure at home, but do ask your doctor or nurse about this first, because they will be able to recommend what type of monitor is most accurate.

Stop smoking

If you smoke, it is important that you stop. Ask your doctor or nurse for help with giving up. Smoking makes kidney damage worse.

Controlling your blood sugar

If you have diabetes, then controlling your blood sugar to the recommended levels can also stop kidney damage getting worse.

Eating healthily

Avoid processed, high-salt and high-fat foods. High salt levels in your diet can lead to raised blood pressure, which can affect your kidneys.

Being careful about tablets

If you buy tablets over-the-counter (without prescription), you need to ask advice from the pharmacist first. Some painkillers, especially anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen, can make kidney damage worse.

Talk to your doctor or nurse before using certain complementary therapies, such as Chinese medicines, as these can affect the kidneys.

HOW WILL CKD AFFECT ME?

Having kidney disease can be worrying for you and your family. But it doesn't have to take over your life. You can still live a fulfilling life with kidney disease by following a healthy lifestyle and your doctor's advice on treatment.

Many people with serious kidney disease and kidney failure live full lives. It is possible to continue to work, enjoy holidays and have an active social life with family and friends.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

- Further information leaflets are available from the National Kidney Federation <http://www.kidney.org.uk/>, or by telephoning their helpline, tel: 0845 601 02 09
- You can view a film about kidney disease, either online <http://www.nhs.uk/video/>, or you can order a copy of the DVD from Kidney Research UK, tel: 0845 300 1499
- Encourage your friends and family to check out whether they are at risk of kidney damage by using the kidney disease self-assessment tool on the NHS Choices website at <http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/>

