



## What is chronic kidney disease?

Chronic kidney (renal) failure is a gradual shutdown of your kidneys. This problem is also called chronic renal failure or chronic renal insufficiency.

Your kidneys are located on each side of your spine above your waist. They make urine by filtering waste products from your blood, control the balance of salt and water in your body and help regulate your blood pressure. As long as you have at least one kidney that is working, your body can get by.

When you have kidney failure, the kidneys are no longer able to make urine, rid your body of wastes, or keep a healthy balance of minerals such as sodium and potassium.

### How does it occur?

Chronic kidney failure is caused by continuous damage to the kidneys over the years by diseases such as:

- High blood pressure ( Hypertension)
- Cysts in the kidney ( Polycystic Kidney Disease)
- Diabetes
- Heart or lung disease

Acute kidney failure, which is a sudden shutdown of your kidneys, may develop into chronic kidney failure. Prolonged use of nonprescription painkillers, such as acetaminophen, aspirin, and NSAIDS (such as ibuprofen or naproxen) can also cause chronic kidney failure.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- A need to pass urine often, or urinating less often or not at all.
- Pale and diluted-looking urine
- Tiredness, weakness, headaches, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting
- Coated tongue
- Itchy skin
- Muscle cramps
- Skin or breath that smells like urine
- Trouble concentrating

### **How is it diagnosed?**

Your healthcare provider will ask you about your symptoms and your medical history, including medications that you are taking. Your provider will examine you. You will have urine and blood tests to determine how well your kidneys are working.

You may also have special x-rays, ultrasound, and or CT scan of your kidneys. In some cases you may need to have a biopsy, a test in which tissue or cell samples are taken from your kidney and examined.

Your provider will look for diseases that could be causing damage to your kidneys, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart or lung problems, or cancer.

### **How long will the effects last?**

Chronic kidney failure develops slowly, and you will have it for the rest of your life unless you have a kidney transplant. Without treatment, kidney failure is fatal.

### **How is it treated?**

Your provider will probably prescribe medication to:

- Treat the disease that is causing the kidney failure
- Keep your blood pressure under control
- Keep the balance of liquid in your body normal
- Keep the balance of minerals in your body normal

If these treatments are not enough, you may need dialysis.

Whether dialysis is used depends on:

- Why your kidneys stopped working
- Your other health conditions
- Your overall health

For many people, dialysis can extend life and improve quality of life.

Dialysis is a mechanical way to do the work your kidneys normally do. It removes waste products and extra water from the blood and can be life-saving. Dialysis can be done in a dialysis facility, but many people can operate the equipment themselves in their own homes.

For those whose health is good other than their kidney failure, kidney transplants can be a welcome alternative to dialysis.